

# CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

*iKudu Project Closing Conference*



6–9 May 2024 · Bloemfontein

*Edited by Lynette Jacobs (University of the Free State)*

*Jos Beelen (the Hague University of Applied Sciences)*

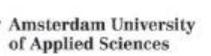
*Katherine Wimpenny (Coventry University)*



Transforming curricula through  
internationalisation & virtual exchanges



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Erasmus+ Programme  
of the European Union





# iKUDU

TRANSFORMING CURRICULA THROUGH  
INTERNATIONALISATION & VIRTUAL EXCHANGES

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**2024**



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## FOREWORD

It all started with an idea in which a group of internationalisation practitioner researchers contemplated future perspectives when another EU-funded project neared the end of its lifecycle. One rainy evening in Antwerp, the core stakeholders in the IMPALA project committed themselves to continuing their higher education internationalisation capacity development work and gestating iKudu. The journey from the humble beginnings of a group of passionate internationalists contemplating a new project to the point where we can reflect on the outcomes of the work done over at least six years was long and winding, but deeply fulfilling. It allowed us to realise our dream of contributing towards an inclusive higher education process that not only benefit students but all stakeholders – students, staff and the universities themselves.

The principal challenge we tackled was formulated at a side meeting held at the EAIE conference in Geneva. The idea was to use a funding scheme partially anchored in the ‘development assistance’ paradigm to decolonise higher education internationalisation through curriculum transformation, which integrates virtual exchange that can potentially include all students. We realised that we had to embrace this complexity and are grateful to the European Commission that we were allowed to structure a project in the Capacity Building in Higher Education programme, which transcends traditional power relations in North-South partnerships by establishing structures which enable equal co-creation of knowledge as well as education and professional development methods.

Why were we so passionate about creating iKudu? In retrospect, the opportunity to develop, through a South-North consortium, an equal partnership that entrenches pluriform perspectives and inclusive internationalisation may have been key. Little did we know at the time of the challenges that lay ahead. We had to overcome the gap caused by the tragic loss of our stalwart Merle McOmbring-Hodges, who was not only central to conceptualising iKudu, but assisted us through her unique approach in retaining the cohesion between stakeholders in our project when challenges arose. Besides, we had to overcome a pandemic, succeed in a global environment in which democratic principles, human rights, and a commitment to the common good are

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endangered, and navigate changes in leadership both in the project and at the consortium universities.

The challenges we encountered made us stronger in our commitment to achieving. We managed to reach the central capacity development targets we had set ourselves as a consortium and maintained a reflective approach, which entailed consistently challenging ourselves to rethink our thinking and publish our ideas, thereby including many higher education actors and academics in the thought processes underlying iKudu. Perhaps most importantly, we developed a space in which we could co-create new ideas which advance inclusive, equal higher education internationalisation. In order for us to have done this, we really needed to appreciate the local contexts of our universities. In doing so, we did manage to equalise internationalisation, because we understood that it meant and looked differently in these contexts, which was our strength. Focusing on the unique contexts is what leads to us achieving inclusive and equal HE internationalisation. This volume reflects on the iKudu outcomes and challenges us to conceptualise the journey ahead.

However, the work remains incomplete. Challenges in power relations underlying collaboration between higher education institutions in the Global North and the Global South, including partnerships between South African and European higher education institutions, remain. While the iKudu consortium succeeded in achieving most targets, the dream of a COIL hub that would connect Southern Africa with other world regions through virtual exchange remains work in progress. My challenge to all in the iKudu family is that we need to continue the work we started. We need to take the conversation about pluriform perspectives in higher education internationalisation forward, sustain the communities of practice that are starting to emerge in our consortium and encourage the academics who gained an understanding of COIL pedagogy to sustain the work, and use their skills to involve others. One of the possibilities for the future includes broadening the iKudu community by transforming it into a network of higher education institutions that is not limited in membership to the original iKudu universities. Within its ecosystem, the academic conversations that evolved during iKudu around COIL, curriculum transformation, and the partnership practice could be deepened and broadened. By creating a network that would be open to membership by other universities, which agrees with the iKudu member universities

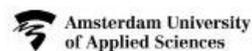
on core values of inclusive internationalisation, we could create a fertile breeding ground for innovation in internationalisation, deepen academic connections and leverage our track record to acquire funding successfully, we could lay the foundation for a sustainable hub that fosters transformative internationalisation concepts and their implementation.

### ***Cornelius Hagenmeier***

Current Head of Internationalisation at the Mittweida University of Applied Sciences

Former Director: Office for International Affairs, University of the Free State

#### Consortium Partners



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Many people contributed to the iKudu project at large, and it is impossible to list all. Still, we want to recognise and thank the following individuals and organisations for their contributions to the project:

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- The leadership of the consortium universities for trusting us with the project, supporting us without fail, and for co-funding the project.
- Cornelius Hagenmeier (UFS), the project coordinator for the largest part of the project, and also Lynette Jacobs (UFS), during the last phase of the project.
- Piet van Hove, the project co-coordinator.
- The iKudu Office team: Chevon Slambee (Project Manager) and Nooreen Adam (Administrator).
- The Working Group Leaders: Jos Beelen (THUAS), Lynette Jacobs (UFS), Eva Haug (AUAS) and Lize-Mari Mitchell (UL), and also Penny Orton and Lesley Cooke (DUT), during the first phase of the project.
- The Institutional Coordinators and co-coordinators:
  - AUAS: Eva Haug and Bernard Smeenk
  - CU: Katherine Wimpenny, Alun DeWinter and Sara Da Costa
  - CUT: Leolyn Jackson, with Ntsoaki Malebo, Sheila Matoti, Chichi Maimane and Nolwazi Qumbisa
  - DUT: Lavern Samuels and Divinia Jithoo
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  - UA: Piet van Hove, Annelien DeWinter and Marilize Pretorius
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  - UNIVEN: Segun Obadire, Nsizwazonke Yende, Thabo Dikgale and Nontlanhla Ntakana
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- The external evaluators: Varkey George and the late Merle McOmbring-Hodges.
- All the partner institutions who hosted the various iKudu events.

- 
- Every academic, every professional and every student who participated in the project activities and in COILs.
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  - Lastly, all the loved ones of the “iKudus” – spouses, partners, family, friends and others: thank you for the patience, support, advice and for cheering us on.

## DEDICATION



### ***We dedicate the conference proceedings in loving memory of Merle McOmbring-Hodges***

Merle made a lasting impact on iKudu through her dedication to women's empowerment, train-the-trainer initiatives, and mentorship. Despite her sudden passing, her contributions became deeply embedded in the project's essence and are expected to endure far into the future. Her influence will likely continue to shape and inspire those involved in iKudu.

*You were more than just a presence; you were the heartbeat of every gathering, the spark of joy in every moment. Your positivity was infectious, your strength a pillar of support for all who knew you. With wisdom beyond measure you guided us through challenges and celebrated our triumphs with unwavering care. Your life was a testament to the power of joy and the beauty of caring deeply. You illuminated every room with your laughter and kindness, leaving an indelible mark on all who had the privilege of knowing you. Though you are no longer with us, your spirit lives on in the countless lives you touched and the memories we cherish. You will forever remain the life of our party, a beacon of light and warmth in our hearts. Rest in peace, knowing that your legacy of positivity, strength, wisdom, and care will continue to inspire us all.*

With deepest gratitude and love, the iKudu Family

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# CONFERENCE PROCEEDING CONTRIBUTORS

Based on the collective work in the project, the following individuals contributed to the writing of the different chapters in these proceedings. The contributions speak for the collective work done by all in the project. The contributors represent consortium partners and inputs from the external evaluators.

Nooreen Adam (UFS)

Divinia Jithoo (DUT)

Valeria Baloyi (UNIVEN)

Zenzile Khetsha (CUT)

Jos Beelen (THUAS)

Nomfundo Khoza (CUT)

Claudia Bulnes (THUAS)

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Lindelwa Vernon-Mkhize (DUT)

Cornelius Hagenmeier

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# IKUDU PROJECT OVERVIEW

## Introduction

Building on the successes of previous collaborations on similar projects (such as the IMPALA project), and the trust capital developed during this time, a group coordinated by the University of the Free State in South Africa and the University of Antwerp in Belgium was awarded funding as an Erasmus+ Capacity Building in Higher Education (CBHE) project<sup>1</sup>. The iKudu<sup>2</sup> project was funded to the value of almost EU 1 000 000 from the European Commission and co-funded by the ten partners in the consortium (five South African universities<sup>3</sup> and five European universities<sup>4</sup>).

At the heart of the iKudu project was the advancement of contextualised curriculum internationalisation within the broader discourse of transformation, using Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) as a specific virtual exchange approach to achieve such; this is discussed in more detail in a section that follows. The project aimed to build capacity for COIL and curriculum internationalisation and transformation to potentially provide all students and staff with contextualised virtual internationalised learning experiences without having to travel.

The iKudu project commenced its activities in November 2019, and the kick-off meeting was held in Bloemfontein, South Africa, from 24 to 26 November 2019.

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<sup>1</sup> Project number: 610322-EPP-1-2019-1-ZA-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP.

<sup>2</sup> Meaning 'a Kudu' in isiZulu, with the 'i' pronounced as in 'introduction', and not 'I'.

<sup>3</sup> University of the Free State (UFS), Central University of Technology (CUT), University of Venda (UNIVEN), University of Limpopo (UL), and Durban University of Technology (DUT).

<sup>4</sup> University of Antwerp (UA), The Hague University of Applied Sciences (THUAS), Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences (AUAS), University of Siena (US), and Coventry University (CU).



**Figure 1: Group photo taken at the iKudu kick-off meeting (November 2019)**

Structures as planned in the proposal were set up, including a steering committee (SC) and a project coordinator, as well as a local project team (LPT) at each university. A suggestion already made at the kick-off meeting was to merge the intended three working groups into two, and to set up the WG1 and WG2 task teams with joint leadership (one from South Africa and one from Europe) to guide the team through the focus areas. WG1 focused on curriculum internationalisation within the broader discourse of transformation, decolonisation, and Africanisation, while WG2 (merging the intended WG2 and WG3<sup>5</sup>) was responsible for COIL virtual exchanges and professional development (training). As background to the different chapters that will follow, curriculum internationalisation and COIL are discussed as key concepts in the iKudu project.

## Curriculum internationalisation

Leask (2015: 9) defines curriculum internationalisation as follows:

*Internationalization of the curriculum is the incorporation of international, intercultural and/or global dimensions into the content of the curriculum as well as the learning outcomes, assessment tasks, teaching methods and support services of a program of study.*

This definition has been taken as a point of departure in discussions about curriculum internationalisation. In the context of the project, curriculum internationalisation is

<sup>5</sup> Considering the thematic nexus between WG 2 and WG 3 and the need to streamline project activities to create synergies and to contain cost, a merger between the two WGs was considered and agreed upon at the kick-off meeting.

understood in the broader transformation context. Internationalisation is inextricably interwoven with the delivery of teaching and learning, and at the same time linked to the notion of internationalisation at home (I@H). Beelen and Jones (2018: 68) redefined I@H as follows:

*Internationalization at Home is the purposeful integration of international and intercultural dimensions into the formal and informal curriculum for all students within domestic learning environments.*

This definition emphasises the intentionality of the endeavour for international and intercultural learning to reach all students. Furthermore, in the specific South African context, it would be impossible to consider curriculum internationalisation without relating it to the Africanisation and decolonisation debates. While there is an emerging consensus in the South African discourse on the curriculum and transformation that there is no contradiction between internationalisation, Africanisation, and decolonisation processes, it was important to consider the relevant issues in context, emphasising their complementarity.

We therefore spent considerable time in WG1 grappling with different understandings – unpacking the different concepts and the complexities of the different meanings and understandings.

## COIL

The development and execution of strategies to guide curriculum internationalisation, including COIL virtual exchanges, was crucial in the project. COIL is an innovative teaching and learning approach that advances global competencies across shared multicultural learning environments using internet-based tools and online pedagogies (Mestre-Segarra & Ruiz-Garrido, 2022). Jon Rubin, who first created this format and named it as such back in 2006 when he was appointed Director of the SUNY COIL Centre, provided the following definition in personal communication (also see Rubin & Guth 2022):

*COIL Virtual Exchange utilizes the Internet to empower students and instructors around the world to develop curiosity, flexibility, and generosity in concert with their academic partners. This benefits two or more classrooms*

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*of collaborating students, usually located in different countries, who have had different life experiences.*

Students in two countries use electronic communication to work jointly through virtual exchange. COIL makes exchanges between academics and students from a variety of linguistic, disciplinary, and cultural backgrounds possible (Naicker, Singh, & Genugten, 2021). Noteworthy is the intentional development of intercultural communicative competence among staff and students. Working with a peer in another country, the lecturer<sup>6</sup> facilitates the competencies and skills necessary to live and work in a multicultural, interconnected world through COIL virtual exchanges. Within the practice of internationalisation at home and internationalisation of the curriculum briefly discussed above, COIL is often utilised as it offers an opportunity for a large number of students to have access to the benefits of internationalisation.

## Tangible project deliverables

iKudu was intended to run for a period of three years, funded by the European Commission to the value of almost €1 000 000. In the project proposal, 18 tangible deliverables were foreseen. These were focused on curriculum internationalisation, transformation, and COIL, also setting targets in terms of students and staff to be included, as well as validation and scalability. All but the student numbers<sup>7</sup> were met, while many targets were transcended<sup>8</sup>.

All targets are listed in the text box that follows and are discussed in detail in the conference proceedings chapters that follow in this publication.

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<sup>6</sup> The terms *lecturer*, *facilitator*, and *academic* are used interchangeably in the proceedings and refer to the 'teacher' in the module.

<sup>7</sup> It became clear throughout the project that COIL is not ideal for large classes, and also that the numbers of students per class of the two partnering academics should be comparable. This excluded students in South Africa in programmes where class size exceeds 300. While it hampered the achievement of the numbers, we see this as an opportunity for further innovation.

<sup>8</sup> For instance, the baseline study did not only focus on curriculum internationalisation at the South African partners as promised but was also conducted at the European partner universities.

**Text box 1: Project targets****Curriculum internationalisation and transformation**

1. A baseline study on curriculum internationalisation and transformation in South Africa, which includes a deep analysis of the five partner universities, will be published (c.f. Chapter 1).
2. Policies, strategies, and guidelines relevant to curriculum internationalisation and transformation will be developed, adopted, and implemented at all partner universities (c.f. Chapter 2).
3. A community of practice on curriculum internationalisation and transformation will be established (c.f. Chapter 3).
4. 50 academics will be trained on curriculum internationalisation and transformation (c.f. Chapter 4).
5. A study on progress with the interdependent processes of curriculum internationalisation and transformation at the partner universities over the first two years of the project will be published (c.f. Chapter 5).
6. Publications will follow workshops and symposia (c.f. Chapter 6).

**COIL Virtual Exchanges**

7. 55 sustained COIL exchanges will be established (15 during the pilot phase and 40 during the roll-out phase in year 2 and year 3) (c.f. Chapter 7).
8. 55 academic teachers were trained on COIL virtual exchanges (c.f. Chapter 8).
9. Guidelines on embedding COIL exchanges in curriculum internationalisation and transformation process will be published (c.f. Chapter 2).
10. A handbook with clear indications on COIL course development and delivery methods, including examples for pilot COIL projects to adopt in their teaching and learning strategies, will be published (Chapter 9).
11. Toolkit for COIL exchanges in South Africa will be published online (Chapter 9).
12. Community of practice on COIL virtual exchanges will be established in SA (Chapter 3).
13. Model for COIL exchange evaluation will be developed and implemented at programme and individual level (Chapter 10).
14. 90 COIL exchanges were evaluated (Chapter 10; Chapter 11).

**Students**

15. A total of 2 625 students from Europe and 2 625 students from SA will engage in COIL virtual exchanges (Chapter 7; Chapter 12).

**Validation and Scalability**

16. A number of publications will inform scholars about the project (Chapter 6).
17. Summative evaluation of the impact of the project on internationalisation will be conducted (Chapter 12).
18. Closing conference for overall project evaluation will be held and peer review conference proceedings will be published (Chapter 14; Addendum D).

## Agility, flexibility, and innovation during the COVID-19 pandemic

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic had a major impact on iKudu; however, the project partners showed agility to innovate and adapt the activities to still achieve the outcomes through different activities.

What was profound was that for two years all project activities took place through the very virtual exchange mode that the project intended to build for curricula, and the project itself became a continuous COIL exercise.

### **Text box 2: Extract from Jacobs, et al., (2021)**

*We are coming together in online spaces to learn together, to be challenged and to challenge one another. We recognise the need for critical cultural awareness, the subtleties and etiquette required in effective intercultural communication, our need to be respectful of our various cultural differences and educational contexts, power dynamics, agency and voice. We are working out all these ways to communicate effectively to achieve our project aims. Communication during our exchanges leads to actions that we conduct outside of our synchronous/ asynchronous exchanges. In effect, we have follow-up actions to complete between collaborative online exchanges.*

The outbreak of the pandemic made it impossible to implement any activities associated with travel. The adaptive management model underlying the management structure of the project proved to be extremely valuable in the circumstances.

### *Developments and specific interventions*

Specific changes to those outlined in the project application have been implemented and are briefly touched upon below. In addition, the character of the project developed a spirit of care and compassion towards each other, with engagement way beyond the project activities.

### **Advisory Committee to support project management**

An advisory committee that included core role players during different phases of the project was set up to advise and support the project coordinator and the central office, to plan for the steering committee meetings, and to consider specific situations that might occur. It comprised the project coordinator and co-coordinator, working group leaders, the external advisers, and the central office administrators. What needs to be noted is the collaborative leadership style that was a strength of the project.

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Collaboration did not take place only within the COIL projects. Instead, it became the essence of the project entirely, trickling through the overall project management and collective decision making.

### Frequent virtual Steering Committee meetings

To allow the project to adjust to the fundamentally changed circumstances on a continuous basis, the frequency of steering committee meetings was increased to monthly virtual meetings. After the mid-term report, when we were able to meet more in person, it was changed to bi-monthly meetings.

### ‘Friday Cuppa’ coffee hours for social interaction

The lack of social interaction in formal meetings was compensated for by starting a weekly virtual coffee hour, referred to as the Friday Cuppa, which allowed the project partners to develop trust capital through engagement in an informal environment, but also providing support for each other during that difficult time of the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond.

### Opportunities for discourse

Discourse in an academic webinar and the project blog allowed iKudu stakeholders to develop solutions that would allow the success of their projects in adverse circumstances.

### Expanded working groups with joint working group leadership between Europe and SA

Although the intention was to represent each of the ten institutions in ‘one of three 10-member WGs’ (cf. project plan E1) in the spirit of mutuality and reciprocity, all institutions were represented by at least one representative in each of the working groups, but not preventing institutions from having more. In all activities, leadership were shared between Europe and South Africa.

### Regular virtual working group meetings

Virtual working group meetings took place at regular intervals to ensure that project activities would continue even in an adaptive form.

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## Stakeholder model

In order for institutions to consider who the iKudu project relates to at their institutions and who the stakeholders for curriculum internationalisation and virtual exchange are, each institution was encouraged to develop their own stakeholder model for the project. Particularly during COVID times, this enabled the project teams to remain in touch with stakeholders at the institutions.

## Appreciative self-study instead of site visits

Site visits to enable the baseline study were not possible. Appreciative inquiry was introduced (discussed in the next section) as a means of self-study, allowing each institution – not only the South African partners – to involve relevant institutional stakeholders to understand existing best practices in curriculum internationalisation and COIL virtual exchanges.

## Confusion regarding terminology led to the Babylon survey and round-table discussions

It became clear that the understanding of terminology used was varied. This led to what was coined the ‘Babylon survey’ (used three times during the project) to get an understanding of the different interpretations, but also to lead to more of a mutual understanding of the complexity of semantics in the internationalisation space. We then also followed up the first Babylon survey with virtual round-table discussion (pairing an EU and SA institution). After travel restrictions were lifted, we had a second round of discussions during the Leadership summit in Siena (2022), and again at the reflective meeting in Durban (2023).



**Figure 2: Round-table discussions in Siena**

### Virtual professional development

The core priority of the project was to get an overview of the best practices relevant to the project at all partner universities, and to initiate professional development for and implementation of the COIL virtual exchanges. Consequently, the anticipated training interventions that were intended to be face-to-face at a specific institution during a visit were restructured to be synchronous virtual training. These became more individualised and changed the nature of the project significantly, as the training somewhat resembled COIL, providing the trainees with experiences similar to what their students would experience. Even after travelling was possible, the strength of virtual collaboration was appreciated and the COIL capacity building continued in that format.

### COIL foundation added after gap was identified

It became clear during the roll-out of the synchronous online training that many of those who attended needed some conceptual understanding of curriculum

internationalisation. Prior to the COIL training, a COIL Foundations module was thus introduced relating to curriculum internationalisation and other concepts, including decolonising of the curriculum and curriculum transformation. This is an example of the complementarity of the work of WG1 and WG2, where capacity building for curriculum internationalisation and COIL came together.

## Appreciative Inquiry as a lens

Appreciative inquiry (AI) is a participatory approach within a paradigm that is centred on opportunity, validation, and inventing the better self (Boyd & Bright, 2007; Elliott, Braithwaite, Lavis, & Richardson, 2020). In line with broader transformative thinking, it aims to bring about change. However, the unique approach of AI focuses on valuing, validating, and building on strengths within the participants, their context, and their own organisation.

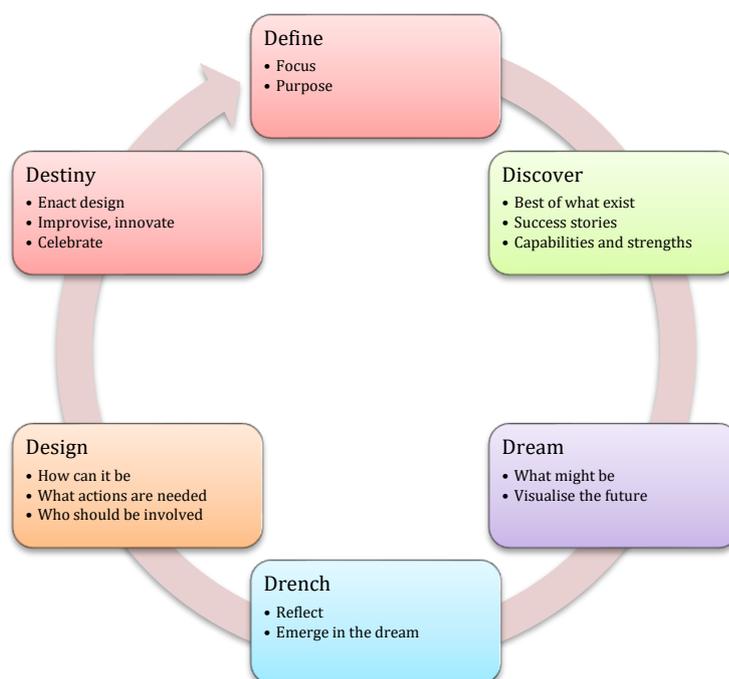
Similar to action research designs, it is a cyclical process, and it consist of at least five stages. During the initial *Define* stage, clarity is sought in an inclusive manner about the purpose of the initiative and the research, and to jointly demarcate the focus (Ogunde, Meyer, Mwambakana, & Mthethwa, 2019). This is followed by the *Discover* stage during which participants focus on the best of what exists – the capabilities and strengths within themselves and their organisation (Jacobs, 2015; Miles, Mensinga, & Zuchowski, 2018). During this stage, storytelling about what worked is most valuable. Sankarasubramanian and Joshi (2019, p. 51) point out that the assumption applied here is “what we want already exist ... and is waiting to be discovered”.

The third stage is the *Dream* stage where participants imagine what could be, and dream about the organisation that they would prefer, and life as they would want it. The question that the participants ask themselves at this stage is ‘what might be?’ as they dream a shared vision (Boyd & Bright, 2007; Miles, Mensinga, & Zuchowski, 2018). Fourthly, the participants actively plan and build concrete proposals towards the desired change, in the stage that is appropriately labelled *Design*. They are guided by the question “how can it be” (Jacobs, 2015, p. 413), “what actions are needed to make the preferred future happen” and “who needs to be involved” (Miles, Mensinga, & Zuchowski, 2018, p. 713). Concrete proposals are jointly built toward the desired change during this stage.

The Appreciative Inquiry culminates in the final stage, called *Destiny*, also sometimes referred to as *Delivery*, where the design is enacted through improvisation and innovation. While this stage is an opportunity to celebrate, it is also – in line with the nature of action research – a time to reflect and identify what remains to be done to better the future (Miles, Mensinga, & Zuchowski, 2018).

Sankarasubramanian and Joshi (2019), however, emphasise that a sixth stage – between *Dream* and *Design* – is essential, namely the *Drench* stage. They argue that during this stage, the realisation needs to dawn on participants that the change in the organisation will happen through the change that will happen within themselves. It requires consciousness in terms of “letting go” (Sankarasubramanian & Joshi, 2019, p. 53) and welcoming the possible future as it emerges. This stage, the authors argue, is a time for inaction, where those involved need to “soak in the dream” (Sankarasubramanian & Joshi, 2019, p. 51).

Based on the above, the process of AI can thus be summarised as follows:



**Figure 3: Appreciative Inquiry process**

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Elliot et al. (2020, p. 52) explain that the role of the facilitator in the process of AI is to sift through what is being discussed and what is happening, and to “celebrate what begins to emerge”.

As Appreciative Inquiry is not focused on a deficit model, nor on pitching universities’ practices against one another, the partners’ respective current practices, ambitions, dreams, and visions were mapped out, discussed, and prioritised for the betterment of contextualised internationalised education for all. Every partner university, including the European universities, compiled a local self-narrative report, which was shared online. This report was based on data generated through four questionnaires (see Addendum A as well as interviews based on the cycle above).

## Attainment of project targets during COVID times

While the progress of the activities was slower than anticipated, it was possible to complete major project milestones, including the identification of academics and partnering of academics for COIL virtual exchanges, their training and mentoring during the COIL implementation, and the completion of narrative Appreciative Inquiry reports as data for the baseline study. Regular meetings were held, and progress was consistently made. It was also possible to involve students in the project activities as planned.

## Seminal project meetings after COVID

After the worst of the pandemic was over, international travel was again possible and specific meetings contributed to the project outcomes.

The following milestones can be noted:

- Leadership summit in Siena (7-9 June 2022)



**Figure 4: Group photo during the Leadership Summit in Siena (June 2022)**

- Site visit to Dutch universities (10-13 June 2022)
- Site visit by WG leaders to all five South African universities (November 2022)
- Reflective Engagement in Durban (September 2023)



**Figure 5: Group photo during the Reflective Engagement in Durban (September 2023)**

- Writing retreat in The Hague (January 2024)
- Site visit to the University of Antwerp (January 2024)
- COIL Conference and workshops at Coventry University (March 2024)
- Closing Conference in Bloemfontein (6-9 May 2024)



**Figure 6: Group photo taken during the Closing Conference in Bloemfontein (May 2024)**

- Signing of the iKudu Network agreement (7 May 2024)

## Conclusion

In what follows, each chapter will briefly discuss the different project deliverables. These were reported on during the closing conference where we not only critically reflected on the project and celebrated its collective successes but were also able to celebrate each of the institutions and formalise the agreement to continue the work as an iKudu Network. The chapters must be read complementary to the information that is provided on the iKudu website.

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# CHAPTER 1: CURRICULUM INTERNATIONALISATION AND TRANSFORMATION

## Commitment 1:

A baseline study on curriculum internationalisation and transformation in South Africa, which includes a deep analysis of the five partner universities, will be published.

## Delivered:

1. Each of the ten institutions conducted a stakeholder analysis and an in-depth baseline study on curriculum internationalisation and transformation during 2020.
2. A detailed comparative baseline study on curriculum internationalisation and transformation in South Africa and Europe based on the ten case studies was published as an internal online report.
3. A chapter on curriculum internationalisation and transformation was published in the conference proceedings.

## Abstract

This chapter sought to contribute to the first deliverable of the iKudu project by gauging the level of internationalisation in higher education and institutions at the start of the project in order to develop purposeful internationalisation of the curriculum and relevant policies. To maintain the inclusivity ethos of the project, we conducted a survey across all iKudu partners. The study adopted the appreciative inquiry lens with an emphasis on the DEFINE and DISCOVER stages. The aim was for institutions to recognise and appreciate what was already happening prior to the iKudu project in terms of curriculum internationalisation and curriculum transformation. The findings indicate that most partners had already developed strategies for internationalisation of teaching and learning at institutional level when iKudu took off, but the implementation of these strategies was at various stages. A salient feature of the study is that the conception, adoption, and implementation of internationalisation at home remains disparate.

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**Keywords:** COIL, Internationalisation, Internationalisation at Home, Internationalisation of the Curriculum.

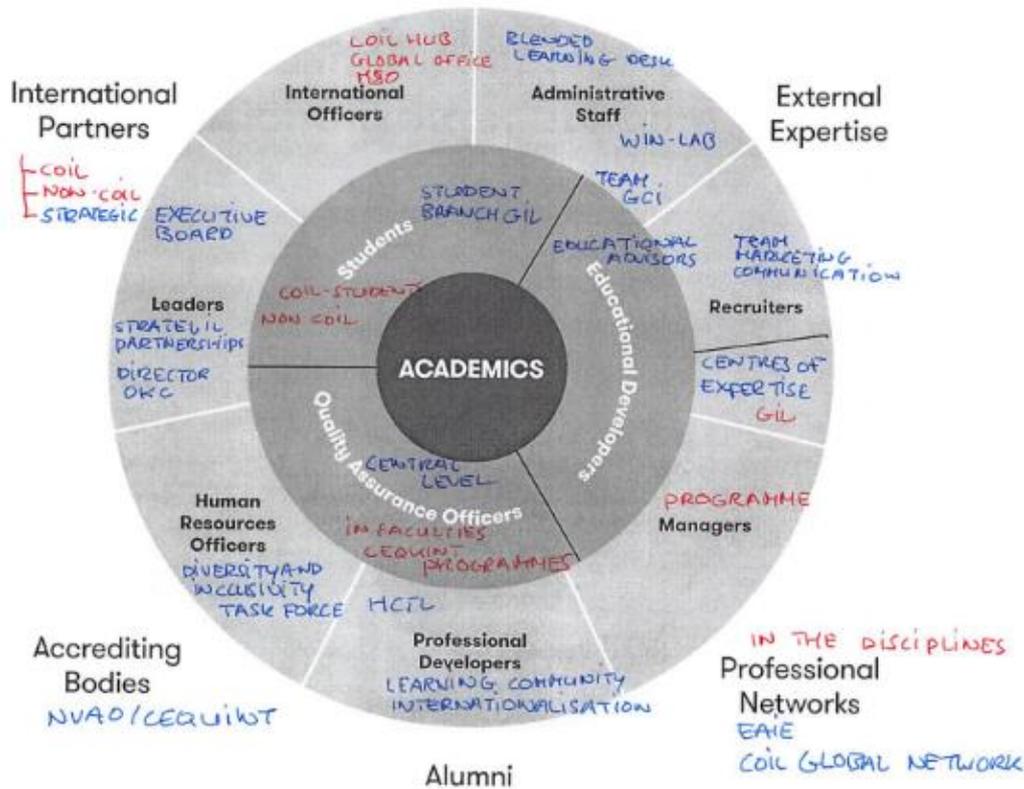
## 1.1 Introduction

In line with the collaborative focus that the iKudu project has embraced from the start, we studied curriculum internationalisation and transformation across all iKudu partners, rather than just the South African partners. Originally, the project intended to have certain activities implemented only by South African partners; however, in line with the collaborative character of the project, we decided that all partners would contribute to all project activities, such as appreciative inquiry and stakeholder analysis.

The discussion in this chapter is based on two sets of data. During the COVID-19 pandemic period, instead of the site visits to inform a single baseline study on curriculum internationalisation and transformation at South African universities, not only South African partners but also European partners engaged, following appreciative inquiry self-studies – as explained in the overview. These studies drew on interviews conducted with stakeholders based on each institution’s stakeholder model, as well as four data sets per institutions (student survey, lecturer survey, management survey, and administrator surveys (see addendum A). Two examples of working documents from their stakeholder models are provided below.

# Stakeholders in the implementation of COIL of internationalisation at home

OKC = EDUCATION, QUALITY, COMMUNICATION  
 GIL = CENTRE OF EXPERTISE FOR GLOBAL AND INCLUSIVE LEARNING  
 NVAO = ACCREDITATION ORGANISATION OF THE NETHERLANDS AND FLANDERS  
 HCTL = THE HAGUE CENTRE FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING  
 ADVISORY BOARDS/ WORKING COMMISSIONS  
 World Of Work



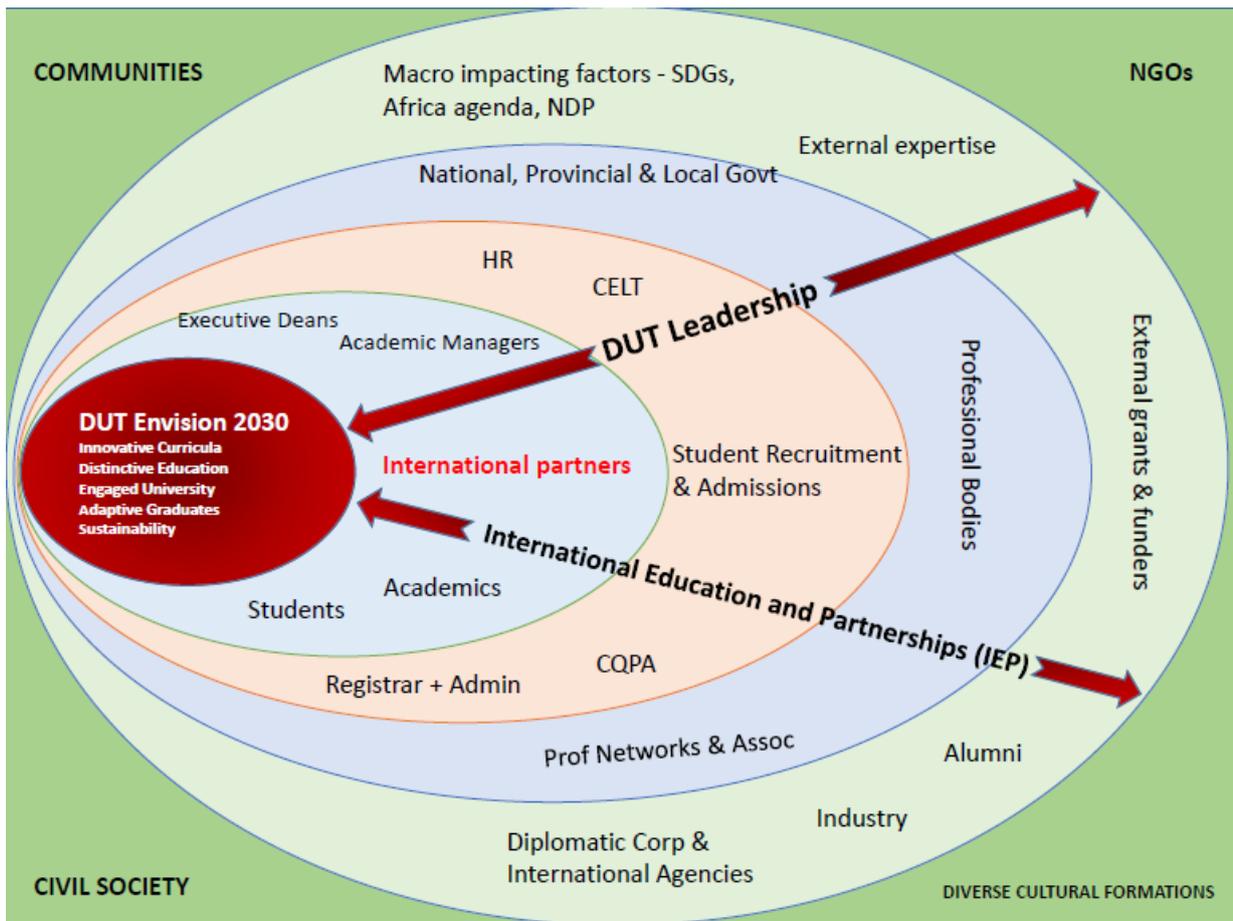
## THE HAGUE

UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES

Jos Beelen, 2015

TEAM GCI = TEAM GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP INTERNATIONAL  
 HPO = FACULTY OF MANAGEMENT ORGANISATION  
 CEQUINT = CERTIFICATE OF QUALITY IN INTERNATIONALISATION  
 WIN = WORLD CITIZENSHIP, INTERNATIONALISATION, NETWORKING

Figure 7: Working document of the THUAS stakeholder model



**Figure 8: DUT stakeholder model**

In November 2023, at least one representative from each partner institution was invited to revisit these studies and respond to another survey focused on teasing out the perceived position of curriculum internationalisation and transformation at the beginning of the iKudu project with a retrospective lens.

It was anticipated that partners would draw on their Appreciative Inquiry Narrative Reports as part of this ‘looking back’ process, which they all completed in 2020. In some cases, the person who originally led the process of the AI study was no longer employed at the partner institutions, which provided yet another perspective on the situation.

## 1.2 Curriculum internationalisation and transformation/renewal prior to the iKudu project

We asked the iKudu partners to recognise what was happening prior to the iKudu project in terms of curriculum transformation through curriculum internationalisation. Not all South African partners were focusing on curriculum transformation through curriculum internationalisation. One partner referred to the 1997 *White Paper on the Programme for Transformation of Higher Education*<sup>9</sup> and the *Policy framework for internationalisation of higher education in South Africa*<sup>10</sup>, while two partners referred to curriculum internationalisation in general terms – such as ‘strategic focus’ and ‘approach to internationalisation of the curriculum’. A number of South African institutions emphasised curriculum drivers such as transformation, decolonisation, and Africanisation at the time of the project’s start, with curriculum internationalisation perhaps not as evident. Still, some of the partners made reference in their AI report of comprehensive internationalisation, which implied curriculum internationalisation, although not explicitly. One institution emphasised curriculum renewal in its report, explaining it as follows:

*When we talk about the issue of decolonisation and for that matter Africanisation, we try to bring in voices that was probably marginalised in the past, they were sitting on the periphery and we introduce them. We need to make sure that we integrate these for two reasons: To enrich the body of knowledge, because those are also different perspectives, but also from a social justice perspective because they were never integrated into the curriculum (UFS AI report).*

Three of the five EU universities had policies for internationalisation at home/internationalisation of the curriculum before the start of the iKudu project.

<sup>9</sup> Department of Education (1997), *Education White Paper 3: a programme for the transformation of higher Education* [https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis\\_document/201409/18207gen11960.pdf](https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis_document/201409/18207gen11960.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> Department of Higher Education and Training (2017), *Policy framework for internationalisation of Higher Education in South Africa*, <https://www.dhet.gov.za/Policy%20and%20Development%20Support/Policy%20Framework%20for%20Internationalisation%20of%20Higher%20Education%20in%20South%20Africa.pdf>.

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Two EU partners mentioned that they also had COIL projects before the iKudu project started, such as Coventry University (since 2011) and The Hague University of Applied Sciences (since ca. 2014), which also held a European COIL conference in 2017. The former applied a top-down institutional approach to COIL following the promotion of small-scale trailblazer projects, which led to strategy development and scaling up, with COIL becoming a key part of the university's internationalisation at home and global engagement initiatives; the latter applied a bottom-up approach. Both universities' practices were written up as the subject of a comparative case study (Beelen, Wimpenny & Rubin, 2020).

Curriculum internationalisation was a more clearly identifiable focus at the European universities than at the South African partners, where the picture is more diffuse. This in itself is not remarkable, since Dutch and Flemish HEIs have been early adopters of internationalisation at home since circa 2001, and the UK partner embraced the related concept of internationalisation of the curriculum from around the same time. It is also worth mentioning that those responsible for completing the survey may not have consulted widely to best appreciate all that was happening locally around that time.

### 1.3 Champions and enablers of curriculum internationalisation

We asked the iKudu partners to name the champions and enablers of curriculum internationalisation prior to 2020.

The South African respondents varied considerably in their answers. Some mentioned champions at institutional level, such as a deputy vice-chancellor of teaching and learning or international offices<sup>11</sup>. Others mentioned that there were no champions or that academics acted as champions, which is difficult to qualify.

One respondent from senior leadership at the UFS identified internationalisation as an enabler of decolonisation, however the drive must come from within.

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<sup>11</sup> In both South Africa and Europe, international offices are referred to in many different ways and very often have different functions. However, globally the use or reference to international offices refers to departments within higher education institutions charged with the responsibility of implementing some functions of internationalisation.

Two of the European partners mentioned that the champions were the international programmes (i.e. those taught in English). In addition, one of the Dutch respondents mentioned that Dutch-medium programmes took the lead in COIL. The two Dutch partners mentioned research on internationalisation as enablers. While professorship in internationalisation ended at AUAS in 2014, the research group Global Learning started at THUAS in 2018. The UK partner mentioned the driving role of research as well.

One European partner mentioned the role of faculties (i.e. organisational units) in the process of curriculum internationalisation. The UK partner described an elaborate top-down structure from the deputy vice-chancellor downwards as part of the curriculum internationalisation, with COIL as a key activity.

As with the previous question, the responses varied considerably, both across the consortium and within the European and South African contexts. Also, responses tended to mention both curriculum internationalisation and COIL, without distinguishing between them or clearly considering COIL as one of the instruments of internationalisation at home.

#### 1.4 How was curriculum internationalisation visible in institutional policies, practice, and discourse at that time

The question was posed to iKudu partners whether curriculum internationalisation was visible in policies, practices, and discourse during the initial implementation of the iKudu project. Generally, curriculum internationalisation was visible in institutional policies across all partners; for instance, UL was in the process of integrating curriculum internationalisation into its various policies and strategies. However, when it comes to curriculum internationalisation in terms of its visibility in practice and discourse, we observed differing stages in terms of implementation and conception.

Most notably, there is a dichotomy across all the partners as to whether curriculum internationalisation should be viewed and practised as a qualitative process or whether it should be quantified in terms of credits accruing to students or even key performance indicators that will provide guidance on how faculty and international offices should support the implementation of curriculum internationalisation. For

instance, AUAS and UA had more quantitative objectives, such as the number of credits for internationalisation, while THUAS emphasised the qualitative aspects, such as intercultural competence. Notably – in the South African case – the UFS went beyond teaching and learning at undergraduate levels, and through its Learning and Teaching Strategy 2019-2024 (TLS) advocated for curriculum internationalisation at research and community levels. An emerging salient point was that where internationalisation policies and strategies were present, they were championed at senior and executive levels.

## 1.5 Insights into why all or some aspects of curriculum internationalisation and transformation were important at the institution?

Trying to understand the drivers and catalysts for curriculum internationalisation and transformation, we asked iKudu partners if they had any insights into why curriculum internationalisation and transformation were important at their institutions. In general, the main catalysts were the following:

- Executive leadership through deputy vice-chancellors and vice-rectors.
- A stronger emphasis on internationalisation at home.
- The growing COIL agenda.

Apart from the evident need for curriculum internationalisation and transformation as captured in the respective institutional policies and strategies across the iKudu partners in Europe, our project work has underscored how access to an international student community could be a key driver for internationalisation at home programmes. At CU, as an example, the COIL agenda has aided the internationalisation at home programme, offering an immediate solution for exposing its students to international contexts. Generally, all partners argued for the need to have an internationalised student population that could function and thrive in different international contexts. A unique driver within the South African context was also the need to align with international standards when it came to new programmes offered, in particular a process imposed by accreditation procedures with professional bodies.

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## 1.6 Conclusion

Remarkable, and even a concern, is the number of responses to this survey that discussed COIL as the key mission of their institutional practice development (this is the goal) rather than an element of curriculum internationalisation, which underlines the continuous struggle with terminology and framing of COIL.

The Dutch and Flemish partners (AUAS, THUAS, and UA) were focused on internationalisation at home well before the iKudu project started and considered COIL as one of the instruments for that. Instead, CU pursued COIL as a driver for internationalising curricula and global engagement. On the other hand, decolonisation and Africanisation took centre stage in the curriculum renewal discourse in South Africa. Still, most of the South African partners had already developed some strategies, or at least mission statements for internationalisation of teaching and learning at institutional level when iKudu took off, but their implementation was at various stages.

Champions of internationalisation at home can be found at different levels with all partners, ranging from senior leadership to academics. This illustrates that curriculum internationalisation is both a top-down and a bottom-up process. It is remarkable that educational developers or teaching and learning centres are absent as champions of curriculum internationalisation at all partner institutions.

The role of incoming international students in internationalised curricula is considered differently from that of international programmes taught in English in Europe (in South Africa all courses are presented in English). These are mentioned as drivers of internationalisation but tend to miss the key characteristic of internationalisation at home, which is to reach all students.

# CHAPTER 2: POLICIES, STRATEGIES, AND GUIDELINES FOR CURRICULUM INTERNATIONALISATION AND TRANSFORMATION AT THE PARTNER INSTITUTIONS

## Commitment 2:

Policies, strategies, and guidelines relevant to curriculum internationalisation and transformation will be developed, adopted, and implemented at all partner universities.

## Commitment 9:

Guidelines on embedding COIL exchanges in curriculum internationalisation and transformation process will be published.

## Delivered:

1. The project delivered and published a guiding document called *Considerations for enabling guidelines, strategies, and policies for internationalised curriculum renewal for universities with a focus on the diverse South African contexts*.
2. Each institution provided evidence of how, during the iKudu project – and drawing from the ‘Considerations’ document – specific policies, strategies, and/or guidelines relevant to curriculum internationalisation and transformation were adapted or developed and implemented at all partner universities within their own contextual realities.
3. Most institutions indicated future plans with regard to policies and strategies beyond the project timeline.

## Abstract

This chapter discusses the attainment of the second deliverable of the iKudu project by reporting on the policies, strategies, or guidelines relevant to curriculum internationalisation and transformation that have been developed, adopted, and implemented at all partner universities. From the start, there was an appreciation for the diversity within the consortium and the uniqueness of each of the ten partner

institutions, and an understanding that institutional context would inform how such documents would be developed and implemented. The project as a collective thus developed a document titled *Considerations for enabling guidelines, strategies, and policies for internationalised curriculum renewal for universities with a focus on the diverse South African contexts*. Drawing from these, all institutions were able to provide examples of policies, strategies, and/or guidelines relevant to curriculum internationalisation and transformation that were adapted or developed and implemented within their own contextual realities.

**Keywords:** Curriculum internationalisation, Policies, Guidelines

## 2.1 Introduction

From the start there was an appreciation for the diversity within the consortium and the uniqueness of each of the ten partner institutions, for instance

- five partners in South Africa, two universities in the Netherlands, one in Italy, one in Belgium, and one in the United Kingdom;
- five universities of applied sciences/universities of technology, three research-focused universities, and two formally disadvantaged universities in rural areas;
- six universities where the main language of teaching and learning is English, and four where it is not English, although with some international courses presented in English; and
- variations in class size between 30 and 1 000+.

Each of the ten institutions was at its own level of attaining internationalised curricula, with its own curriculum and internationalisation drivers (see Chapter 1), and its own context. Thus, a key principle in the project was not to take a comparative approach when engaging with the different institutions, but to appreciate each based on its uniqueness.

The second deliverable of the iKudu project was that policies, strategies, and guidelines relevant to curriculum internationalisation and transformation had to be developed, adopted, and implemented at all partner universities.



**Figure 9: QR code to the Considerations for enabling guidelines, strategies, and policies for internationalised curriculum renewal for universities with a focus on the diverse South African contexts online document**

To support the process, the project collectively developed the *Considerations for enabling guidelines, strategies, and policies for internationalised curriculum renewal for universities with a focus on the diverse South African contexts* (hereafter ‘Considerations’), which was published online after the Leadership Summit in Siena in 2022. Based on the appreciation for the different contextual realities at and unique character of each university, we decided to use the word ‘Considerations’ instead of ‘Guidelines’ to allow for interpretation and adaptation at each institution. Institutions within the project, but also elsewhere, can thus draw from this document as a repository of ideas – rather than being prescriptive – to adapt their own institutional policies, strategies, guidelines, and more.



**Figure 10: Front page of the Considerations for enabling guidelines, strategies, and policies for internationalised curriculum renewal for universities with a focus on the diverse South African contexts published online**

In this chapter, we first report and reflect on the approach taken to develop the *Considerations*, and then provide an overview of the diverse ways in which partner institutions have gone about developing and improving their policies, strategies,

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guidelines, and more for curriculum internationalisation and transformation during the timespan of the project, and what they plan to still do.

## 2.2 Developing the *Considerations for enabling guidelines, strategies, and policies for internationalised curriculum renewal for universities with a focus on the diverse South African contexts*

Although the work on this started earlier, the *Considerations* document was one of the tangible outcomes of the Leadership Summit at the University of Siena in 2022. It drew not only from the different activities at the Leadership Summit – including the institutional reporting on the Appreciative Inquiry and the activities during the ‘Strategies for Curriculum Renewal’ session – but also from the earlier development of stakeholder models for each institution, the unpacking of the concepts in the working group meetings, the COIL Foundations module during the professional development, as well as the deliberations at the Friday afternoon Cuppa meetings, the virtual round-table discussion between paired European and South African universities prior to the summit, and the first iteration of the so-called Babylon survey (See addendum B).

The *Considerations* document was built on shared approaches to the key concepts, as well as definitions of curriculum transformation, comprehensive internationalisation, decolonisation, COIL, international virtual exchange (IVE), and more elaborated on in the glossary, but also acknowledging that the definitions are partial. In its core content, the *Considerations* document suggests specific patterns towards internationalised curriculum (p. 8), as well as towards COIL implementation (p. 9). Such patterns, although adjustable to the variety of situations and characteristics of each partner institution, include elements related to financial and structural support, the existence of specialised administrative units, technical and digital support, and a combination of top-down and bottom-up strategic commitment. This document is positioned as ‘a repository of ideas’ in the hands of all partner universities in order to enable them to consider future strategies and guidelines for curriculum renewal and COIL.

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## 2.3 Developments at the ten partner institutions

From the very beginning of the iKudu project, the partner universities have engaged in efforts to analyse and conceptualise their practices on internationalisation, curriculum development, and COIL. After the *Considerations* was published online – also taking into account the different institutional curriculum drivers – partners used it in a fit-for-purpose manner. They considered, adapted, and implemented their own policies, strategies, or guidelines for curriculum internationalisation and transformation.

In September 2023, during the three-day ‘Reflective Engagement’, questions related to embedding internationalisation of the curriculum within the discourse on transformation were specifically considered, as well as the role of COIL as a tool for curriculum internationalisation success, together with the evolution of COIL support within partner institutions (see Chapter 4).

In addition, each institution was asked to

- report back in a WG1 meeting on how they decided to draw from the *Considerations* and use it in their contexts, and the way forward;
- reflect on their progress since the publication of the AI report;
- engage with the *Considerations*; and
- give feedback in a survey based on the above.

The survey was structured as a brief open-ended questionnaire aimed at collecting qualitative data on the following main issues:

1. Existence of curriculum renewal structures
2. Existence of policies, strategies, or guidelines with regard to curriculum internationalisation and curriculum renewal
3. The relevance of international partnerships as a factor in curriculum internationalisation and curriculum renewal
4. The changes and impact of the iKudu project on institutional frameworks of internationalisation.

The answers to the survey questionnaire outline the diverse approaches adopted at partner universities as well as the diverse levels of institutional commitment towards curriculum renewal and comprehensive internationalisation. Below, we present examples of the collected data, per institution.

**Table 1: Examples of policies, strategies, and guidelines from partner institutions**

	Examples of changes as a result of iKudu	Examples of future plans mentioned
AUAS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Shift from mobility to curriculum internationalisation</li> <li>- Adopted a new UAS Internationalisation Policy (IP) 2023-2027</li> <li>- COIL recognised at module and programme level as didactical principle</li> <li>- Our Internationalisation Policy 2023-2027 resonates with the iKudu project:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- We educate our students to become global citizens</li> <li>- Our international orientation is inclusive, sustainable, and digital</li> <li>- We enhance our international identity and reputation</li> <li>- We foster more sustainable collaboration with international partners in the fields of education and research</li> <li>- We provide staff with the opportunity to develop professional skills in the area of international orientation</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- COIL Policy Guidelines under development</li> <li>- We are establishing internationalisation as one of the expertise areas of a newly created Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL)</li> <li>- Implementation plan of the new IP 2023-2027 will be ready in March 2024</li> <li>- As part of inclusive internationalisation, the Global South is specifically mentioned</li> </ul>
CU	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- CU is influenced indirectly, as key themes of iKudu are within the group strategy of the institution</li> <li>- CU has seen changes in the way COIL is supported during iKudu, moving from a centralised to subsidiarised support</li> <li>- Centre for Global Learning has grown during this period and has seen internationalisation of the curriculum research mature and expand, allowing new ways of working with the COIL subsidiary</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Huge appetite to continue collaborating with the iKudu family</li> <li>- Centre for Global Learning intends to continue researching COIL and supporting PhD students with an interest in this area</li> <li>- Centre for Global Learning intends to continue working with 'peoples futures' – the new subsidiary – to ensure a closer relationship between COIL delivery and COIL research</li> </ul>
CUT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The revised CUT Teaching and Learning Plan has adopted COIL as the tool to be used for curriculum internationalisation. The former University Internationalisation Committee (UIC) did not include support divisions, but by adopting a comprehensive internationalisation approach influenced by the iKudu</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Publishing comparative knowledge regarding student experiences with COIL</li> </ul>

	Examples of changes as a result of iKudu	Examples of future plans mentioned
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>project, support divisions are members of the UIC</li> <li>- CUT COIL Community of Practice (CoP)</li> </ul>	
DUT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The institutional and internationalisation strategies have been supporting the iKudu activities</li> <li>- University leadership promotes internationalisation activities, including COIL, through the inclusion of KPIs in annual institutional performance plans that are cascaded throughout the university</li> <li>- Internationalisation Strategic Framework</li> <li>- Local Management team that has not been expanded to the DUT institutional management team for international virtual exchange</li> <li>- COIL Lab established to provide direct support for the design of COIL projects</li> <li>- COIL Mastersheet – database for IVE throughout DUT</li> <li>- Annual institutional T&amp;L plans, including COIL</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The establishment of additional COIL spaces across campuses in line with institutional planning and renovations</li> <li>- The advancement of international virtual exchange at postgraduate level</li> <li>- Further research on the impact of COIL at DUT and the communities associated with DUT</li> </ul>
SU	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- COIL has been included in strategic documents and as an objective for some administrative staff</li> <li>- iKudu has helped the institution to push forward the discourse on the benefits of COIL courses</li> <li>- Decolonisation was also brought to the attention of colleagues involved in the project</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Personal contacts of researchers' partnerships are developed, which will also have an impact on teaching</li> <li>- The International Affairs Board has decided to submit a proposal to the university leadership on the creation of a recognition mechanism for COIL activities for the teachers involved</li> </ul>
THUAS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Involvement of more stakeholders, e.g. educational developers</li> <li>- Emerging support structures</li> <li>- Hiring of an institutional COIL coordinator (Reinout) for two days a week, central at team strategy</li> <li>- Strategic plan clearly mentions internationalisation at home as one of the ambitions and COIL as an area to further develop our leading position (whatever that means)</li> <li>- The strategic plan of the university is implemented between 2023 and 2028</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Since the strategic plan was launched, several other institutional plans have been drafted, including the educational vision and the knowledge agenda (research)</li> <li>- The internationalisation plan is now being drafted, the expectation for THUAS is that COIL will have a larger role</li> </ul>
UA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Not only developing disciplinary competences, but also the broad range of transferable skills</li> <li>- Internationalisation strategy consists of a clear central vision, combined with diversity in implementation in the different faculties</li> </ul>	

	Examples of changes as a result of iKudu	Examples of future plans mentioned
	- COIL 'Voorsprongfonds' (funding from Flemish government, YUFE); training for COIL	
UFS	- COIL support portfolio was established in the Office for International Affairs - Curriculum Internationalisation project based on the <i>Considerations</i> was rolled out in two faculties, but not excluding others who want to participate	- Intentional engagement and knowledge sharing at departmental level - Development of a tool on curriculum internationalisation
UL	- Strategic dissemination and discussion in Academic Planning Committee and Senate	- Work on a university-wide plan for curriculum internationalisation and transformation - Strengthening the support in the international office for COIL
UNIVEN	- The institution entrenched curriculum renewal, which includes curriculum internationalisation, in its Strategic Plan 2021-2025 - The institution finalised its Linkages, Partnerships and Internationalisation Policy and Procedures (2022) - Finalised the Centre for Higher Education Teaching and Learning E-Learning Policy (2021).	- Launch COIL Africa initiative

Overall, a common element worth mentioning is, on the one hand – in some cases a disconnection between curriculum renewal practices and strategies and internationalisation. On the other hand, all project members share a strong commitment towards developing COIL and other forms of international virtual exchange and to continue doing so.

To provide a summative overview on some of the other key matters, the following can be shared:

### 2.3.1 Existence of internationalisation of the curriculum structures

Most institutions have curriculum support in the form of educational advisers, academic planning and curriculum development departments/staff, centres for teaching and learning, and advisory boards. Some are centralised, while in other cases, curriculum renewal is in the hands of faculty structures with no link to central bodies for internationalisation structures. There are also institutions that combine these approaches.

It appears that curriculum internationalisation at most institutions is largely driven (or expected to be driven) by international offices, but how it fits into the broader institutional structures linked to curriculum development differs. At some institutions, international offices are responsible for COIL/VE and in others it resides with curriculum support centres. Mandates, capacity, and influence to contribute to curriculum development/transformation/renewal varies.

While internationalisation committees are centralised at most partner institutions and report on curriculum internationalisation, among others, both the function of the international office and the internationalisation committee at least at one institution operate at faculty level and not institutional level.

### *2.3.2 Existence of policies, strategies, or guidelines with regard to curriculum internationalisation and curriculum renewal*

The level of influence of the iKudu project on the strategies/policies/frameworks of internationalisation varied, inter alia, based on the advancement of the concepts at that stage. Yet, all institutions reported on developments in terms of strategies, policies, or frameworks during the time of the project.

Priorities at the institutions differ; for instance, not all of them refer explicitly to curriculum transformation, renewal, or decolonisation. While some universities' policies/strategies/frameworks intentionally include COIL/VE, others provide more general statements on digitalisation and curriculum.

### *2.3.3 The relevance of institutional partnerships for curriculum internationalisation and curriculum renewal*

While partnership drivers at the institutions have traditionally focused more on mobility, research, and other projects, there is increasing awareness of how institutions can leverage their international partners to advance COIL/VE and other forms of curriculum internationalisation. Yet, several institutions indicated that their international partnership policy/template for the memorandum of understanding does not include curriculum internationalisation/transformation activities. The awareness of the potential of partnerships to advance curriculum internationalisation was raised

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during the time of the project. The presence of European Alliances for Knowledge plays a relevant role in the choices of some European partner institutions.

### 2.3.4 *The changes and the impact of iKudu project on institutional frameworks for internationalisation*

The iKudu project has allowed participating institutions to engage and collaborate, not only in terms of COIL/VE, but specifically on conceptualisation and awareness of the foundations of curriculum internationalisation. The project has played a relevant role in promoting COIL/VE, in creating awareness about its relevance and helping partner institutions to build capacity for COIL, and to focus on the role of COIL within their internationalisation strategies. At one institution, for instance, the iKudu project influenced the development of an institutional curriculum internationalisation project.

As several institutions indicated in the survey, curriculum renewal/transformation/decolonisation is the responsibility of academics and faculties, but it is enabled and supported by a variety of stakeholders, including curriculum developers and advisory boards, international offices, centres for teaching and learning, and more. Changing university policies and strategies and how institutions and faculties operate and engage in curriculum transformation/renewal requires commitment and involvement from university leaders and deans of faculties. At the same time, the involvement of enthusiastic leaders per se is not a guarantee of concrete implementation of strategies on internationalisation of the curriculum, decolonisation of the curriculum, and more. There is a need for coherent and contextual presence of both top-down and bottom-up engagement in such practices.

## 2.4 Conclusion and recommendations

The iKudu project created the basis and opportunity for institutions to engage, reflect, build capacity, and adopt strategies and policies on curriculum renewal, internationalisation, decolonisation, and COIL. All partner universities engaged in processes of change, both bottom-up and top-down. The journey within the iKudu consortium represents a concrete example of how the principle of trust and equity is crucial in any transformative practice. The proposals elaborated during the workshops in Siena and in Durban, as well as the summary produced within the *Considerations*

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document, provide a solid base on which to build strategy/policy/guidelines, and confirm that the existing diversity among partner institutions does not in any way represent a weakness or a threat to the possibility of achieving common goals in curriculum renewal, internationalisation, and COIL.

A second relevant factor that emerges in all iKudu practices and documents is the focus on the principle of inclusion. All partner universities have repeatedly stressed that the final aim of any transformation of the curriculum, COIL practice, or internationalisation and decolonisation effort at institutional level is centred on the need to contribute directly to educate global citizens, to create inclusive educational systems and practices, to empower and enable all learners to develop their potential, and to participate fully, as well as to challenge the historical dominances of knowledge.

This approach towards inclusive curriculum renewal, internationalisation, and COIL is apparent, as several partners – reflecting on the concepts of policies and strategies on internationalisation – affirmed that there is a need to ‘deliver an inclusive and engaging curriculum that reflects cultural perspectives’; ‘combines important aspects of sustainability, inclusivity, and internationalisation’; and ‘align with global goals focusing on themes such as sustainable development, diversity, and inclusion’.

What has become clear, and what is recommended, is that curriculum internationalisation specialists and support for curriculum internationalisation be made available at institutions and to give these structures mandates/power to influence what faculties/departments/academics do in terms of curriculum development.

# CHAPTER 3: BUILDING THE IKUDU COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE: TAKING THE LOCAL TO THE GLOBAL

## Commitment 3:

A community of practice on curriculum internationalisation and transformation will be established.

## Commitment 12:

A community of practice on COIL virtual exchanges will be established in SA.

## Delivered:

Over the period of the iKudu project, a strong COP on both curriculum internationalisation, transformation, and COIL has developed. This was also formalised with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding to formalise the COP as the iKudu Network.

## Abstract

A community of practice (CoP) is a group of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a certain topic and who wish to deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on a continuous basis. It needs to have a clear domain, and a clearly defined practice of common standards and approaches. The nature of the interactions within such a CoP is particularly important, with the CoP evolving dynamically over time to suit the needs of its membership, and indeed, its membership can change over time. During the almost five-year lifetime of the iKudu project, the core team developed strong relationships during trying times, and perhaps a stronger CoP developed than would have been if it were not for the pandemic. iKudu's identity is transitioning from being 'a project' to being a CoP as well as a formal network.

**Key words:** Community of practice, networks, sustainability

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## 3.1 Introduction

iKudu has existed as an ERASMUS+-funded project since 2019 and the project ended in May 2024. The initial objective of the iKudu project was to equip staff and institutions with the knowledge, skills, governance, and processes necessary for successful implementation of curriculum internationalisation and Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) in particular. Strong relationships have been formed, many COIL projects have been initiated, and the in-person events show evidence of a vibrant community. Looking to the future, iKudu's identity is transitioning from being 'a project' to being a community of practice as well as a formal network. This community has been evolving throughout the project and is particularly interesting due to its global nature and membership located in the Global South and Global North. This community representing South Africa and Europe is a trans-border South-North mixture of expertise, experience, and insight.

A community of practice (CoP) has been defined by Wenger et al. (2002) as a group of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a certain topic and who wish to deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on a continuous basis. They are spaces for professionals, academics, and practitioners to share and learn from one another, create debate, generate knowledge, and help to provide constructive critique alongside the sharing of best practice in relation to a particular practice (Wenger 1998).

A CoP needs to have a clear **domain**, a clearly defined **community** that is in regular contact with each other, and a clearly defined **practice** of common standards and approaches (Wenger 2002; Wenger 2006). The nature of the interactions within such a community of practice is particularly important, with participants interacting with each other through mutual engagement to produce a set of guidelines and resources (ibid). CoPs tend not to be static, instead dynamically evolving over time to suit the needs of its membership, and indeed, its membership can change over time (Lave & Wenger 1991). Davenport and Hall identify that CoPs have numerous benefits, helping those who are early career to mix with peers, connecting people across functions of an organisation, and they also have the ability to connect different organisations together

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(2002). They also see CoPs as being innately interdisciplinary, bringing together people from across fields in order to focus on new challenges (2002:212).

Applying the above to the iKudu project, the domain that gives our group a clear identity is our shared interest and commitment to curriculum internationalisation and COIL in particular. Focusing on COIL and decolonised internationalisation at home practices, iKudu has brought together a dynamic consortium from the Global South and Global North and has developed a diverse CoP, bringing together more than a hundred people across ten institutions. As a community we share information, exchange good practice, and build expertise in the design and delivery of COIL projects as well as internationalisation of curricula. Moreover, our iKudu family consists of practitioners, administrators, and researchers who – through regular interaction and dialogue – create a shared practice and generate new knowledge.

Each of the institutions within the consortium has its own localised internal CoPs, which were established prior to iKudu or simultaneously, but whose membership has intersected with iKudu due to the nature of the work undertaken. These intersecting communities of practice are often related to COIL or more broadly to internationalisation of the curriculum, and iKudu has benefited greatly from gaining insight into the practices of the consortium membership. Similarly, the local, institutional CoPs benefit greatly from initiatives such as the iKudu consortium, as they provide opportunities for institutions to be members of a global community, exposing institutions to opportunities that include but are not limited to sharing practice and expertise, receiving support, professional development, community building, and collaborative research. iKudu also engages with a large number of different stakeholders – lecturers, researchers, management, learning technicians, and students. Bringing in all these diverse institutional, national, and professional perspectives enables institutions to foster their communities of practice, which are instrumental for institutional success in internationalisation within institutions and internationalisation of the curriculum, with COIL being one of the main tools for internationalisation of the curriculum.

This chapter showcases the dynamic interplay between the local and the global communities of practice that iKudu has brought to our institutions. Four institutional

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narratives illustrate which strategies were followed in building a CoP for curriculum internationalisation and COIL and the role of the iKudu community in this. Next, we zoom out and consider the global networks that were unlocked through iKudu. Finally, we will briefly reflect on the future of our iKudu community: how sustainable will our community of practice be when the formal project structure ceases to exist? Will the purpose of our community remain the same, will the community welcome new members, how open or closed are the boundaries of the community, and what holds the community together?

## 3.2 Examples of Local Communities of Practice at iKudu partner institutions

### 3.2.1 *University of Venda (UNIVEN) and Durban University of Technology (DUT)*

Institutions have used various strategies for developing communities of practice for the successful implementation of internationalisation initiatives. Some strategies used include raising awareness to enhance buy-in by academics and leadership at the university. This includes providing information on COIL and the impact and benefits of international virtual engagements on internationalisation. Universities such as UNIVEN and DUT have used this strategy, which focuses on facilitating workshops per faculty to orientate academics and deans to COIL. The inclusion of students who had participated in COIL in these workshops provided proof and possible impact of COIL on students. Including departments such as the Centre for Higher Education in Teaching and Learning (CHETL)/Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CELT) as one of the stakeholders has become important as these have a central role to play in the COIL project and in the infusion of international standards into the existing curriculum at the university.

Aligning internationalisation strategies to institutional strategies has encouraged internationalisation at various institutions. The institutions' focus on decolonisation, developing adaptive graduates, innovative curriculum, and research also became strategies used to encourage the building of communities of practice. Some of the best practices to ensure and strengthen CoPs at UNIVEN and DUT include the following:

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- Partnering of academics through speed dating or COIL Partnering Fairs, providing support, guidance, and professional development for successful development of COIL projects.
  - Building relationships with stakeholders within the institutions and facilitating the introduction of networks to other networks, promoting research output, supporting virtual exchange, creative journaling, and making use of Padlet and Google Drive.
  - Promoting research into virtual collaborations, promoting co-supervision on research projects that contribute towards the sustainability of COIL.
  - Showcasing COIL projects on Padlet, keeping reflective journals, and training the trainer, which is in magazine format.
  - Using COIL champions to attract and mentor other academics, revisiting methods of assessment, teaching and learning pedagogy.

Some challenges identified by UNIVEN and DUT in developing the CoP include the following:

- Misalignment of timetables, schedules, and academic calendars. This misalignment often causes lecturers to restructure or abandon potential COILs.
- The promotion of COIL as an internationalisation at home activity could be improved. Both institutions have taken steps to make COIL more visible. In 2023, both UNIVEN and DUT hosted several faculty workshops across institutions. The workshops were also meant to get buy-in from academics and dispel myths around COIL as an addition to the teaching workload.
- Both institutions are working towards improving their virtual teaching and learning infrastructure to support virtual engagement as well as to resolve connectivity issues.

The plans to resolve the noted challenges include buy-in by management, continuing COIL workshops, and requests for more infrastructure and involvement of departments such as CHETL and CELT.

### 3.2.2 *The Hague University of Applied Sciences (THUAS)*

At THUAS, there was already experience and engagement with COIL prior to the start of the iKudu project. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the delivery of education, as well as the launch of the Dutch subsidy incentivising academics and educational

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developers to (re-)design COIL projects, have had an enormous impact on the COIL practice at THUAS; a community of practice is starting to emerge, both organically and systematically. Our involvement in the iKudu project has also contributed to this; its very presence, as well as the diversity of participants involved, i.e. lecturers, educational developers, leadership, and researchers, have allowed us to collectively examine our own practice more critically through the lens of decolonisation and transformation of education. Both themes had been rather absent in the THUAS context.

Initially, COIL started as a bottom-up process driven by enthusiastic lecturers, but through the actions of individual champions – such as highly experienced COILers, internationalisation coordinators at faculty level, and even a programme manager with experience in COIL – communities of practice have started to appear in some of the THUAS faculties. In these CoPs, lecturers can exchange practices, lessons learned, and even share COIL partners; COIL has become a strategic priority in the internationalisation plans of faculties. As in the case of UNIVEN and DUT, the strategy of involving champions was an important way to kick-start a CoP. As this bottom-up process was seeing wider engagement of lecturers and the volume of COIL practices was expanding steadily across the institution, the lack of institution-wide coordination was addressed by appointing an institutional coordinator who, among other things, has recently launched a THUAS-wide COIL CoP. This CoP does not only bring together COIL practitioners from different degree programmes, but also includes educational developers, researchers, coordinators, and managers. Besides connecting people, the aim of the community is to enhance the quality of the THUAS COIL practice and adopt an evidence-informed approach. Newcomers to COIL are onboarded via a separate training trajectory and invited to join the CoP.

While the aim of the COIL THUAS CoP is to initially connect internal stakeholders, the community has open boundaries to include externals, such as colleagues from the COIL partners. The CoP is informally linked to other COPs within and beyond THUAS through networks of individual members who can bring the learning and insights gained through participation in other circles to the home community. The iKudu community is one of those CoPs, and as such acts as a relevant external entity that allows us to bring in other perspectives and encourages us to reflect on our institutional COIL practice

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and enrich the knowledge we are creating through this Global South-Global North connection.

### 3.2.3 Coventry University (CU)

Similar to THUAS, CU has a long and varied history of internationalisation of the curriculum prior to involvement in the iKudu project. Our experiences with COIL started in the 2000s, when individual academic vanguards started using new forms of virtual exchange and online collaboration practices. Although initially small in number, these bottom-up practices were quickly noticed and started to inform top-down policy and practice from around 2010 when CU began to adopt a whole-institution approach to internationalisation.

Initially, CU's approach to internationalisation was predominantly focused on physical travel, international student numbers, and transnational education provision. However, it was recognised that experiences relying on travel and living abroad were incredibly costly – for student and institution alike – and only allowed a relatively small number of student experiences. A decision was then made to embed online international learning experiences (referred to as OIL) into curricula across the whole institution.

By 2014, COIL (still referred to as OIL internally) had been embedded as a critical element of internationalisation, supported by a centralised administrative office – the Centre for Global Engagement. Formalised CoPs were created to allow educators to share their projects and to inform training practices across the institution. COIL was made mandatory for all courses, with a 'wheel' of curriculum internationalisation being created to guide teaching staff:



**Figure 11: Coventry wheel of curriculum internationalisation**

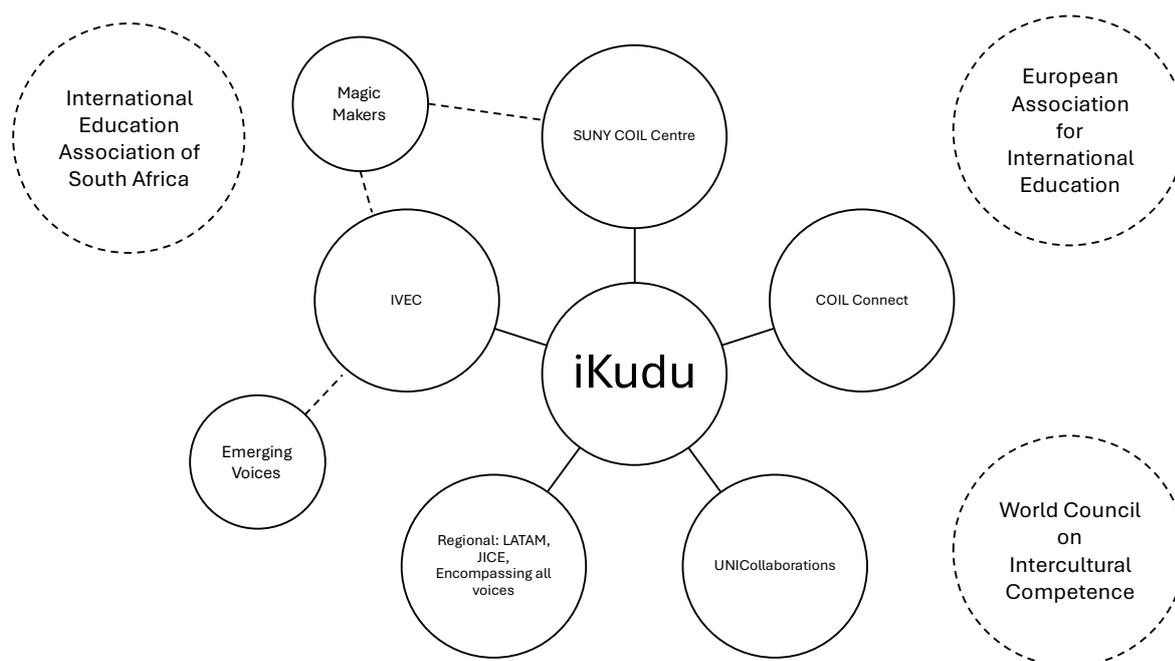
Most recently, CU has undergone a number of changes in the post-COVID era. CU joined iKudu when centralised institutional support was still available to the university, but these functions have since been closed. This has resulted in a change of COIL practice, with previously high student engagement in COIL dropping and strong CoPs becoming fractured. The whole-institution approach to internationalisation has become devolved, with colleges having stronger ownership of how they internationalise their courses.

In the wake of this, iKudu has been a galvanising force for creating new CoPs at the Coventry University Group, with representatives from each of the main colleges as well as researchers and senior management coming together to focus on curriculum transformation through COIL, as well as on decolonised approaches to internationalisation. Through iKudu, COIL has a renewed spotlight, and new communities of practice have blossomed as a result.

### 3.3 Globally connected Communities of Practice

Even though the localised internal CoPs exist separately to iKudu, above all, the narratives show a degree of interdependence and engagement with the iKudu community. Another notable facet of iKudu is that it is connected to and consists of

members who also belong to other global COIL networks and CoPs. Many of the COIL practitioners within the iKudu consortium were already active prior to the iKudu project. These practitioners were developed through established networks and CoPs and as a result, access to these networks has been brought into the iKudu consortium. iKudu has acted as a central hub bringing together all those rich connections. Examples of such networks will be presented below and are visually captured in Figure 12.



**Figure 12: Connected Communities of Practice**

Through iKudu, the consortium member institutions have gained access to COIL Connect, an online platform for COIL partnering that has also provided platforms for discussion forums on anything related to COIL. The COIL Connect platform allows for university CoPs as well as regional COIL CoPs to register their forum pages, allowing registered practitioners to connect with other CoPs.

The DUT COIL practitioners have been trained through the State University of New York (SUNY) COIL Centre. As members of the SUNY network, practitioners are given access to discussion forums, webinars, and special interest groups (SIGs) that highlight diversity,

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equity and inclusion (DEI), pedagogy, technology, and assessment. This CoP is accessible to the iKudu consortium as well.

As a networked CoP, many members of the SUNY COIL group have also become part of the 'Magic Makers' COIL group. This group of COIL practitioners emerged from both the SUNY and IVEC networks and organises monthly meetings to discuss creative solutions and innovations within the virtual exchange space; again, this group includes many of the iKudu consortium members.

Additionally, UNICollaboration is another network brought into the iKudu consortium through individual members already working with UNICollaboration. As a CoP, UNICollaboration promotes training and research on virtual exchange methodology, offering bespoke training to HEI practitioners. As part of this CoP, practitioners have the opportunity to promote the development and integration of research and practice in telecollaboration and virtual exchange across disciplines and engage in raising awareness of virtual exchange at an institutional and policy-making level. Through the CoP, UNICollaboration aims to keep practitioners, researchers, policy makers, and management informed.

Regional CoPs such as the Latin American COIL group (LATAM) and the Japan Hub for Global Innovative Education (JICE) have been made accessible to the iKudu group through various collaborations with iKudu partners. The University of Monterrey (UDEM), the Universidade Estadual Paulista (Brazil), and the Metropolitan Institute of Technology (Colombia) established the LATAM COIL network to promote COIL methodology in the Latin American region. The regional network provides a CoP to promote communication between practitioners and institutions, promote the practice and research of COIL methodology at the higher education level, and expand benefits of the COIL method for curriculum internationalisation through collaboration with other national and international networks and organisations that are also promoting COIL.

More recently, the JICE network has been launched and will kick off in 2024, led by Kansai University, Tohoku University, and Chiba University. The network is also funded by the Japan Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports Science and Technology under the

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Inter-University Exchange Project. JICE aims to revolutionise higher education through innovative virtual, blended mobility and serves as a knowledge platform for innovative global education and blended mobility.

The global network for International Virtual Exchange, IVEC, is also a network that has been feeding into the iKudu consortium members through involvement in IVEC activities, such as the annual conference. The IVEC annual conference is the largest and most prominent event on virtual exchange, providing a forum for instructors, administrators, instructional designers, and educational leaders from institutions around the world interested in technology, international education, and new pedagogies. A sub-CoP of IVEC is the Emerging Voices group that has a standing panel session at the annual conference to discuss issues around establishing virtual exchange and COIL at an institution, as well as the challenges and opportunities for institutions embarking on their virtual journey. Through iKudu, access to these CoPs is enabled.

Another emerging CoP that includes iKudu members is the Encompassing All Voices group, which aims to include more universities from other African countries. Through capacity building initiatives, the group aims to provide support and platforms for universities embarking on virtual exchange.

Finally, the iKudu members are also connected to broader internationalisation CoPs while engaging in networks such as the European Association for International Education (EAIE) and the World Council on Intercultural and Global Competence, affording all iKudu members opportunities to engage as well.

### 3.4 iKudu Network

At the end of the project, the consortium members took the strategic decision to continue the work through a formal network, and the agreement was signed on the first day of the closing conference. National organisations such as IEASA and other universities in South Africa will be invited to join the iKUDU network. It does form an integral part of the sustainability aspect of the project.

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## 3.5 Conclusion

Over the course of the project's lifespan, iKudu has emerged as a global, dynamic community of practice centring around the use of COIL, and Africanised, decolonised internationalisation practices. It has contributed to the establishment and flourishing of localised institutional CoPs, while at the same time unlocking access to a wider network of regional and global CoPs. It is this symbiotic relationship that we think will help sustain the future of the iKudu community, as we will continue to meet, interact, and learn from each other through our local and global involvement in various CoPs. iKudu has acted both as a catalyst for COIL-related CoPs and as a broker connecting us across institutions, professional roles, cultures, and networks. Having built such varied alliances and relationships, we are positive about the future of the iKudu CoP. Moving beyond the conclusion of iKudu as a project, it is hoped that the community will expand far beyond its original ten-partner consortium and continue to grow and evolve to tackle new challenges and to embrace new ways of bringing together educators and learners as part of internationalisation of the curriculum.

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# CHAPTER 4: CAPACITY BUILDING FOR CURRICULUM INTERNATIONALISATION AND TRANSFORMATION

**Commitment 4: 50 academics will be trained on curriculum internationalisation and transformation.**

**Delivered:** Numerous activities related to curriculum internationalisation and transformation took place, including webinars, roundtable discussions and the COIL Foundations module during the COIL training. Dedicated sessions on curriculum internationalisation and transformation took place at the different engagement meetings. We reached more than 239 academics during the project time.

## **Abstract**

The fourth commitment was to train at least 50 academics on curriculum internationalisation and transformation. Neither of these two terms is exact, and like the many other concepts relating to it, there are contextual understandings which had to be understood and acknowledged. We thus took an engagement approach to the training, instead of an instructional approach, to allow for information sharing whilst acknowledging the many perspectives that exist. This led not only to capacity building for COIL, but also to the publication of the Consideration documents as discussed in Chapter 2, the collection of perspectives through what we called the “Babylon surveys” due to the confusion that existed, many research publications, and more. This resulted in a deeper understanding, albeit at various levels of depth, of the concepts related to curriculum internationalisation and transformation amongst the 239 academics that we reached during the project lifetime.

**Key words:** curriculum transformation; internationalisation of the curriculum; curriculum transformation; pluriform perspectives

## 4.1 Introduction

One of the major tasks of Working Group 1 (WG1) was to train 55 academics on curriculum internationalisation and transformation. We understood that neither of

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these two terms is exact, and like the many other concepts relating to it, there are contextual understandings which had to be understood and acknowledged. We thus took an engagement approach to the training, instead of an instructional approach, to allow for information sharing, whilst acknowledging the many perspectives that exist. The buildup throughout the project will be discussed under different headings that mark milestones.

## 4.2 Identifying core concept and discussing the different understanding and interpretations of the concepts in the core WG1

We started the process in the WG1 meetings where we could regularly meet and engage with the different understandings of the concept, and identify other relevant concepts that relate to it. These engagements led to us identifying the following concepts as being key to understanding curriculum internationalisation and transformation.

- Internationalisation of the curriculum
- COIL
- Internationalisation at home
- Decolonisation of the curriculum
- Internationalisation of education
- Global citizenship
- Inclusive internationalization of higher education
- Decolonisation of Higher Education Internationalisation
- Comprehensive internationalisation
- Africanisation and Higher Education
- Europeanisation and Higher Education
- Inclusive education
- Transformation of Higher Education

In some cases, a well-known definition was the point of departure for the concepts, and in other cases we deliberated on the meaning, what emerged from the different institutions in the initial appreciative inquiry research that was conducted by WG1

members (see project overview and Chapter 5), and how it is and can be implemented at the partner institutions.

Ways to engage with the different concepts not only included formal presentations, but also creative ways of engaging with concepts, including bringing or creating visual representations of the terms, responding to a YouTube video, and more. Examples of images that different WG1 members downloaded and shared in the discussions to demonstrate their understanding of the concepts are displayed below.



**Figure 13: Examples of images shared in the discussion of the concepts**

## 4.3 Webinars

In November 2020, different speakers presented their views at a webinar over two non-consecutive days. The overall theme of the webinar was: Shaping Post-COVID Internationalisation through Virtual Exchanges and Curriculum Transformation.

The programme of the two-series webinar follows:

### Text box 3: Programme of the two-series webinar

Theme	Lead Presenter	Respondent
<b>SESSION I (20 November 2020 14:30 SA time)</b>		
Welcome: Prof. Corli Witthuhn, Vice-Rector Research and Internationalisation, University of the Free State, South Africa		
Internationalisation Strategy Development in the Age of COVID-19	Leolyn Jackson, Central University of Technology, South Africa	Bernard Smeenk, University of Applied Sciences Amsterdam, Netherlands
Virtual Appreciative Inquiry	Prof. Jos Beelen, The Hague University of Applied Sciences, Netherlands	Lize-Mari Mitchell, University of Limpopo, South Africa
The need for Curriculum Transformation in SA	Jan Crafford, University of Venda, South Africa	Eveke de Louw, The Hague University of Applied Sciences
Benefits of COIL for Teaching and Learning at Research Universities	Piet van Hove, Vice-President European Association for International Education, University of Antwerp, the Netherlands	Tiana van der Merwe, University of the Free State
Shaping a Transformative Internationalisation Research Agenda in an Online Environment	Prof. Lynette Jacobs, University of the Free State, South Africa	Dr Alun DeWinter, University of Coventry, United Kingdom
<b>SESSION II (27 November 2020 14h30 SA time)</b>		
Welcome: DVC Antwerp		
Rapporteur on 1 <sup>st</sup> Session: Merle McOmbring-Hodges, independent internationalisation consultant, and Reinout Klamer, The Hague University of Applied Sciences.		
Reconnecting Local Internationalisation to Society	Prof. Joseph Francis, University of Venda, South Africa	Prof. Alessandra Viviani, University of Siena, Italy

Theme	Lead Presenter	Respondent
Capacity Development for Virtual Exchange in an Online Environment	Eva Haug, Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences, Netherlands	Lesley-Anne Cooke, and Penny Orton, Durban University of Technology, South Africa
Can COIL serve as a Driver for Curriculum Transformation?	Prof. Katherine Wimpenny, University of Coventry, United Kingdom	Prof. Nonceba Kekana-Mbambo, University of Limpopo, South Africa
The Current Flows of COIL through the Covid Stream	Co-presenters: Jon Rubin, COIL Consulting, United States of America Dr Lavern Samuels, Durban University of Technology, South Africa	
Revisiting the Nelson Mandela Bay Declaration on Internationalisation	Dr Nico Jooste , Senior Director: AFRIC	Jos Beelen, The Hague University of Applied Sciences
Reflection on Webinar	Varkey George, external evaluator	

In his presentation, Leolyn Jackson (CUT) pointed out how the COVID-19 pandemic showed the importance of having curriculum internationalisation and various forms of virtual engagement embedded into the internationalisation strategy, and not having the strategy focusing on mobility only. Katherine Wimpenny (CU) argued that while COIL is an innovative approach to curriculum internationalisation, it should also be focused on transformative learning and transforming the curriculum to allow for diverse perspectives to emerge and to be engaged with. In the discussion between Lynette Jacobs (UFS) and Alun DeWinter (CU) it was emphasised that internationalisation should be accessible to all, especially if our goal is to create global citizens through education.

At least 79 attendees joined the webinars and engaged during the Q&A sessions.

#### 4.4 Babylon survey

Because of the subjective and contextual understanding of the different concepts related to curriculum internationalisation and transformation, we had what we called an introductory “Babylon Meeting” in WG1, specifically to problematise the assumption that demarcations and definitions would be acceptable to all. We intentionally portrayed some contrasting views on terminology that is generally used in the internationalisation discourse (see list in section 4.2), without necessarily being aware

of the nuances in the discourse, or even have clarity on what is meant and understood by the terms. We afterwards designed and shared the first “Babylon Survey” to allow members of the working group and the Steering Committee at large to provide their input and understanding of the different terms, and to critique and add to what some would consider “standard” definitions. The survey instrument can be found on the iKudu website (<https://www.ufs.ac.za/ikudu>) under > Research > Data generation tools (survey available on the iKudu website under research tools).

The purpose was not to distil single definitions for terms, but rather to acknowledge, accommodate and build an understanding of the complexities and subjectivities. A total of 20 participants (WG1 members and Steering Committee members) took part in the first survey. Data generated were anonymised and shared with all WG1 members to draw from in the next activity, namely the virtual roundtable discussions.

#### Text box 4: Extract from the responses to the Babylon Survey

- <sup>2.4)</sup> **Internationalisation at Home**  
 Jos Beelen and Elspeth Jones' definition of **Internationalisation at Home** reads as follow:
- “Internationalisation at Home is the purposeful integration of international and intercultural dimensions into the formal and informal curriculum for all students within domestic learning environments.” (Beelen, J., & Jones, E. (2015). Redefining internationalization at home. In A. Curai, L. Matei, R. Pricopie, J. Salmi & P. Scott (Eds.), *The European higher education area: Between critical reflections and future policies* (p. 76). Dordrecht: Springer. Retrieved from <http://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-3-319-20877-0>)
- From your perspective, please provide comments in the definition provided.
- A familiar definition we use.  
 Interesting to consider the relationship of IaH to IoC, the differences / the uniqueness of each
  - Again, I often use this definition and I appreciate the way that the definition stresses all students and the domestic learning environment. It seems to be a narrower definition than Betty Leask's as it leaves out the teaching methods and support services. On the other hand, the specific mention of the informal curriculum does provide a fuller picture of the student experience and I think it is important to approach internationalisation with attention to the entire student experience. I wonder if at some point the hidden curriculum finds its way into the definition as this concept resonates a lot with lecturers- both in identifying challenges/issues and seeing opportunities to internationalise teaching and learning. Interestingly, lecturers talk about IaH as being a suite of activities whereas I approach it at the same level as internationalisation of the curriculum.
  - Again, a very usable definition in our context, but probably only known to a limited number of 'insiders'.  
 For me, interesting and challenging elements in the definition:
    - again, does the intercultural aspect always have to be explicit?
    - how to define 'domestic' learning environment? How does this relate to the diversity in the classroom, with the presence of diverse 'local' and international students? And what can a future 'classroom' be in terms of networked hybrid learning environments?
    - how do we build the informal curriculum? what about the feeling of belonging to a (diverse) group: how can we foster and leverage that?
  - Again, intercultural does not necessarily imply transnational. Did the authors intend “intercultural” to mean “between people in different geo-political spaces”?

## 4.5 Paired virtual roundtable discussions

With the representatives in WG1 becoming more confident about the different concepts and how it can be actioned, but also the many understandings that could be attached, as well as the reasons why one should engage in such drives, we planned and executed five different virtual roundtable discussions in the build-up to the Leadership Summit

in Siena. We paired one European partner with one South African partner each to host five separate roundtable discussions. Academics from the two universities in the pairs were invited to join the discussions on curriculum internationalisation and transformation, but it was also open to colleagues from outside the institutions to join. The pairs were as follows:

- Durban University of Technology and University of Antwerp
- University of Venda and Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences
- Central University of Technology and The Hague University of Applied Sciences
- University of Limpopo and Coventry University
- University of the Free State and University of Siena

During the roundtable discussions, academics were invited to engage on internationalisation of the curriculum, and to deliberate on the meaning of concepts such as transformation, decolonisation, Africanisation and Europeanisation within the higher education internationalisation discourse and practice is. A total of 78 academics and professional staff took part in the roundtable discussions, and the different pairs reported on insights afterwards.

Pairs afterwards reported back at the WG1 meetings, and insights were shared.

## 4.6 Leadership summit

The purpose of the Leadership summit was two-fold. Firstly to develop a document outlining high-level guidelines for curriculum renewal, which include virtual exchange/COIL. Secondly, to develop a shared understanding of curriculum renewal/high-level support for the development of COIL support structures at South African institutions/support for COIL hub at iKudu universities.

As it was attended by university leadership and senior academics, it was again an opportunity to engage on curriculum internationalisation and transformation and for institutions to learn also from one another.

Session topics included the following:

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- Connecting COIL Virtual Exchanges to a Renewed Curriculum: What makes COIL Virtual Exchanges Work? (Eva Haug and Lynette Jacobs)
  - World-Café on Outcomes of iKudu Appreciative Inquiry and Roundtable discussions (Lynette Jacobs and Jos Beelen)
  - Strategies for Curriculum Renewal (Jos Beelen and Cornelius Hagenmeier)

The leadership summit was followed by site visits to the AUAS and THUAS to learn from their approach to curriculum internationalisation and transformation, as well as COIL.

## 4.7 COIL foundations

Members of WG1 and WG2 together engaged regularly on progress made, and a need was identified to provide the broader perspective of internationalisation of the curriculum as a foundation for COIL. It was thus introduced as an introductory module to the COIL training.

## 4.8 Working group leaders visits to South African partners

The WG leaders did site visits to the different South African institutions. Amongst others, the purpose was to engage with the institutions on presentations on curriculum internationalisation at each South African partner institution during the WG leader visits.

Topics that were discussed inter alia focused on:

- Why does internationalisation of the curriculum matter?
- How students need to feel part of the world and be competent to deal with local and global challenges.
- The importance of pluriform perspectives.
- How do we internationalise in an inclusive manner?
- What internationalised curricula entails.

## 4.9 Durban engagements

One of the intended outcomes of the Reflective Engagement in Durban, South Africa in September 2023 was to obtain an understanding of stakeholder perspectives on the processes of curriculum internationalisation and transformation at the iKudu partner

universities, and how they relate. This not fed into the study on the interrelated processes of curriculum internationalisation and transformation (<https://www.ufs.ac.za/ikudu> > Research > Interdependency of Curriculum Internationalisation and Transformation), but was again a chance to build capacity for curriculum internationalisation and transformation, with the group of attendees expanding at each milestone.

Jos Beelen and Nonceba Mbambo-Kekana did a presentation on *Embedding IoC within the discourse on transformation*, which was followed by a presentation on *Internationalisation of the curriculum at the partner institutions* by Lynette Jacobs and Jos Beelen.

Lastly, the *Interrelatedness of the concepts* was unpacked in a session we called the Bridges, where participants were given images of bridges, with concepts on either side, and had to deliberate about the connection between them.



**Figure 14: Example of a “Bridges” poster**

#### 4.10 Second Babylon Survey

A second iteration of the Babylon Survey was conducted during the Durban visit to gain an understanding of how the understanding of the different concepts has deepened and evolved. Again, the feedback was shared by all to make sense of it.

## 4.11 Female Voices in COIL Conference and iKudu meeting in Coventry

A final opportunity to expand the group of people who engage with curriculum internationalisation and COIL was at the Female Voices in COIL Conference, followed by two days of engagement during a site visit to Coventry University. Presentations included:

- Overview of iKudu with a focus on the hidden curriculum.
- Critical VE new directions: Equity, inclusion, diversity, including ontological and epistemological diversity.
- Key issues related to COIL with a focus on making COIL a curriculum internationalisation success.

## 4.12 IoC training by numbers

The total number of staff research through the capacity building for curriculum internationalisation endeavours, excluding the site visits to the South African campuses, was 239. Some attended only one of the opportunities, while others were present at each session.

**Table 2: Numbers of attendees at different capacity building events**

Date	Event	Total numbers
Nov 2020	Webinar	79
Mar – May 2022	Roundtable discussions	78
Nune 2022	Leadership Summit Siena	51
2023	COIL foundation course	37
Sept 2023	Reflective Engagement Durban	69
Mar 2024	Coventry visit	52

In the first 18 months of the project, the focus was on discovering what was happening at the institutions through the appreciative inquiry approach, and to report on such. The number of people involved at each institution was not recorded. The attendees at the different engagement by the WG leaders at South African Universities the end of

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2022 were also not recorded in all cases. Neither of these is thus reflected in the numbers above.

### 4.13 Conclusion

The engagement over the time period of the project resulted in a deeper understanding of the concepts related to curriculum internationalisation and transformation, and the complexities amongst the 239 academics that we reached, albeit at various levels of depth. Several research papers were published (see <https://www.ufs.ac.za/ikudu> > Research > Dissemination of research) and more are forthcoming. The contextual complexities at each of the ten consortium institutions provided for richness of insights and, most importantly, confirm that while there might be generally accepted trends in terms of curriculum internationalisation and transformation, each institution will take a particular approach, depending on the contextual factors at the institution.

# CHAPTER 5: THE INTERDEPENDENT PROCESSES OF CURRICULUM INTERNATIONALISATION AND TRANSFORMATION ACROSS THE PARTNER UNIVERSITIES OVER THE LIFETIME OF THE IKUDU PROJECT

Commitment 5: A study on progress on the interdependent processes of curriculum internationalisation and transformation at the partner universities over the first two years of the project will be published.

Delivered: This chapter reports on the results of the study on the progress on the interdependent processes of curriculum internationalisation and transformation at the 10 universities not only over the first two years, but the project as a whole.

## **Abstract**

The fifth tangible deliverable the project was committed to was to do a study on progress on the interdependent processes of curriculum internationalisation and transformation at the partner universities over the first two years of the project will be published. This addresses several of the specific project objectives in examining and reflecting upon curriculum internationalisation and transformation at the Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in the partner countries, by understanding and determining structural development status and needs. Also, context-specific internationalisation and transformation of curriculum practices across the consortium partners, as well as how the partner universities were conceptually connecting the concepts of Africanisation and Europeanisation with internationalisation and other relevant concepts. This chapter reports on the above over the timeline of the project. While iKudu has led to limited structural changes at institutions, it has brought many useful insights and contexts that will need to be taken forward. Important to note is that the iKudu project has contributed to individual shifts in those that were part of the project over the years, even at institutions where effects seems limited. The

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conversation and work must continue and will hopefully be done through the iKudu network.

**Key words:** Africanisation, Curriculum internationalisation, decolonisation, Europeanisation, transformation

## 5.1 Introduction

This study report details the interdependent processes of curriculum internationalisation and transformation at the partner universities over the lifetime of the iKudu project. This is a specific deliverable that was assigned to Working Group 1. This focus addresses several of the specific project objectives in examining and reflecting upon:

- Curriculum internationalisation and transformation at the Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in the partner countries, by understanding and determining structural development status and needs.
- Context-specific internationalisation and transformation of the curriculum practices across the consortium partners.
- How the partner universities were conceptually connecting the concepts of Africanisation and Europeanisation with internationalisation and other relevant concepts.

Curriculum internationalisation is a mandatory requirement for all South African (SA) universities as per the *National Policy Framework for the Internationalisation of Higher Education in South Africa* (2020). Each university must develop its own policy and plan on internationalisation, with annual reporting targets for the South African Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET). For some universities this has required significant work to be done, not least as universities had to appreciate the concept of ‘internationalisation’ within their institutional context, including how curriculum internationalisation and transformation could be understood and practised. Further, the National Policy Framework came out as the COVID pandemic erupted, which coincided with the start of iKudu (our project partner ‘kick-off meeting’ at University of the Free State (UFS) was in December 1999. As a consequence, it would be a testing first two years. Nonetheless, innovation and creativity have been harnessed throughout,

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due to the consortium's collective commitment to the project and its ambition, and through the progress shared throughout the international virtual collaboration, including the use of innovative online teaching and learning approaches, not least COIL virtual exchange.

Our efforts in iKudu have been focused on how South-North institutional review and responses are required to move beyond the rhetoric of openness, pluralism, tolerance, flexibility, and transparency, towards ways in which curriculum internationalisation and transformation are reflected in educational practice. What has been required is a continued critical questioning of the key terms in use across our educational contexts and in the wider international research discourse, not least in reviewing diversity and inclusion agendas, but in challenging mindsets and practices for the improvement of sustainable, quality, learning and teaching.

Co-funded by the Erasmus+ programme of the European Union, the consortium is a collaboration among five South African universities, led by the University of the Free State (UFS), the Durban University of Technology (DUT), the University of Limpopo, (UL) the Central University of Technology (CUT), and the University of Venda (UNIVEN), with five European Universities (The Hague University of Applied Sciences (THUAS), the Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences (AUAS), the University of Antwerp (UA, Belgium), the University of Siena (US, Italy) and Coventry University (CU, United Kingdom). The four-year project<sup>12</sup> has focused on offering space and action-orientated curriculum practices to question how collaborative online international learning (COIL) exchange can engage learners across our South-North institutions and beyond in internationalised and decolonised curricula.

In terms of 'data' informing this report, since the project started, the iKudu partners have engaged in institutional and cross-institutional dialogue in a continued attempt to share interdisciplinary. Briefly, this has included each university team initially conducting a local preliminary 'As-Is' analysis of their curriculum internationalisation

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<sup>12</sup> The project was extended by 18 months by agreement with the funders due to the Covid pandemic.

approach in a narrative report, using an Appreciative Inquiry lens.<sup>13</sup> These reports were shared and discussed in online Working Group One (WG1) meetings,<sup>14</sup> as well as in roundtable discussions amongst paired global South-North university colleagues. Additionally, workshops and discussions took place face to face in project partner meetings at the University of Sienna (US) in June 2022, and at a further project partner event at the Durban University of Technology (DUT) during September 2023. Finally, each institution completed a set of questions in an end-of-project survey open for 3 weeks (November–December 2023). This report brings together a reflective analysis of these data sets. Following this introduction and context setting, the report presents on two main themes, with subthemes, followed by a summarising conclusion in which the next steps for building interinstitutional and interdisciplinary knowledge are considered.

## 5.2 Institutions and individuals' engagement with the concepts of curriculum internationalisation and transformation

### 5.2.1 South African Universities

When considering the main drivers of internationalisation activities, it is evident most of the universities have an articulated vision and mission. At the UFS this embraces diversity, a common purpose and belonging, where the symbols and spaces, systems and daily practices all reflect a commitment to openness and engagement. Colleagues at the DUT shared that diversity, inclusion and equity are viewed as their key principles, with the acknowledgement of the historical links with Eurocentric hegemony. At the CUT it was noted how the needs from the world of work, as well as national and global imperatives are identified as curriculum drivers.

Colleagues across the SA partners have shared how COIL/VE is a smart and cost-effective way to internationalise the curriculum on the home campus. UNIVEN

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<sup>13</sup> Appreciative Inquiry (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005; Elliott et al., 2020) focusing on opportunities, appreciating strengths, understanding 'what works' rather than focus on the negative, with a momentum for change driven by collaborative/collective action.

<sup>14</sup> Two main working groups (WGs) WG2 have focused on planning, developing, and implementing COIL virtual exchange projects within institutions. WG1, whose efforts are the focus of this report have focused on the Internationalisation of the Curriculum across the partner universities.

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colleagues shared how from their perspective, internationalisation at home practices (I@H) – with emphasis on the purposeful international and intercultural dimensions in both the formal and the informal curriculum for all students (Beelen & Jones, 2015) – as part of inclusive Internationalisation, can only occur if there are deliberate programmes that infuse international dimensions into the curriculum, measured and infused into policies driven by senior leadership and then embraced by staff. It was acknowledged by several SA HEIs that inspired leadership is required to integrate these necessary components, including a contextually appropriate internationalisation plan.

Moreover, several SA partners shared how an internationalised curriculum requires striking a balance between local (South African/African) and international knowledge systems. Central University of Technology (CUT) colleagues also shared that internationalising the curriculum should not be dominated by one source of knowledge, mainly from the global north, but on appreciating that approaches such as COIL can be used to imbed knowledge from the Global South in the curriculum. Current research conducted at the CUT focusing on indigenous knowledge was seen as a driver of curriculum by some, for example informing pharmaceutical knowledge, which is used to drive curriculum decolonisation. However, CUT colleagues did share that staff are still grappling with the concepts of curriculum internationalisation and transformation, as it means different things to different people.

At the UFS, instead of using the term ‘international curriculum transformation’, the focus is rather on curriculum renewal and epistemic diversity. Staff are encouraged to engage with a diversity of ideas and perspectives complementing their institutional ethos of excellence and achievement. Over the last few years, the UFS has seen a paradigm shift from teacher-centred, to student-centred, to learning-centred approaches, with learning as the focus, with both the lecturers and students as contributors to the learning, bringing with them their experiences and expertise.

It was important to note that curriculum ‘transformation’ was also defined in terms of accessibility to higher education for students and in how the curriculum responds to the different environments students find themselves in, considering the diverse SA contexts partner institutions reflect – from the urban, e.g. DUT and CUT, to the rural campuses of UFS Qwaqwa and the rural Universities of Limpopo (UL) and Venda

(UNIVEN). Understanding international curriculum transformation thus, whilst always diffuse, was articulated as being more about systemic change than that of change in mindset and approach by individuals. The role language itself plays was also of note across several partners reflections. Other concepts that are linked with curriculum internationalisation and transformation are decolonisation, Africanisation and Europeanisation, strengthening a contextual understanding of internationalisation endeavours.

Some colleagues representing the SA universities spoke of being besieged with crisis management and the pressure of responding to multiple daily challenges. Academics shared feelings bombarded with instruction to internationalise, decolonise, and ensure equity, diversity, and inclusion-compliant education. However, colleagues at the UFS reflected upon how such agendas should not be viewed as mutually exclusive, but rather seen as interdependent and overlapping. An important statement made by one of the UFS participants at the engagement session in Durban was, “inasmuch as we need to decolonise internationalisation, we need to internationalise decolonisation”, spotlighting the need for equity and inclusion in knowledge sharing and generation. Similarly, this statement also highlights the discrepancies and tensions surrounding the concept of decolonisation as part of internationalising the curriculum and the need to clarify the role language and context also play in how the iKudu consortium have worked to define key terms such as decolonisation.

### 5.2.2 *European universities*

Policies driving curriculum internationalisation and wider internationalisation practices exist across all the European partners, at national level, as well as the level of institutional plans. The Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences (AUAS) has included curriculum internationalisation across its institutional internationalisation policy plans. Three main drivers embrace the principles of the institutional strategy: digitalisation, sustainability and diversity and inclusion. While each Department (School/Faculty) identifies different graduate attributes and has different drivers, the three principles are recognised university wide.

THUAS has an institutional strategy and educational vision stipulating the need for all undergraduate programmes to have international/intercultural learning outcomes.

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Their internationalisation policy supports a qualitative internationalisation approach with a clear role for the formal curriculum and for staff development.

CU internationalisation strategies have been in place for the past 10+ years. From 2015–2021, ‘internationalisation’ was a core strand of Coventry’s ‘DNA’, not least through its focus on graduate employability and development of global competencies and transferable skills. The current 2030 Strategy includes the following drivers: Collaboration – Diversity and Inclusion – Innovation – Integrity, and resourcing and delivering on COIL remain, as does “Being a Global University”.

UA has long opted for competence-based and student-centred education, considering their strategic themes (diversity and inclusion, sustainability, internationalisation, nexus education/research, employability, and entrepreneurship). Of note is how in each degree programme there is a specific Education Committee, which includes the teaching staff but also the students, and which is in charge of ensuring a balanced curriculum. Interestingly, at the University of Sienna (US), it was evident there is a sharp division between some courses that are more inclined to internationalisation and some that are less. This appears to be shaped from out of the disciplines, but also from the enthusiasm and CVs of the teachers. This is not so surprising, as it is acknowledged in the wider discourse how some academic disciplines are more ‘open’ to internationalisation than others are (e.g. Zadavec & Kočar, 2023). The major plus at US is the relatively high number of double degree programmes that opens several opportunities for students and teachers to engage in the enhancement of skills sets and wider knowledge (with possible study at partner universities) deepening community and peer connections and opening up multiple career options.

COIL at CU has been an approach within I@H since 2010. Yet, at the sharing of practices in Durban some CU colleagues sensed other HEIs are experiencing more spotlight (attention/focus) and resources to support their internationalisation activities. Perhaps an explanation is that at CU, internationalisation is now viewed as ‘part of everything we do’, and has been for some time, and therefore should not need to be focused on separately, but should be embedded as core practice. Perhaps another explanation is also how the dialogue at Coventry has turned more towards how the curriculum addresses the SDGs, Education for Sustainability, Global Citizenship,

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) agendas, social justice and so on. It does seem such terms and concepts are occurring as forms of expressing internationalisation. At THUAS too, Global Citizenship was mentioned the most and a term staff in the institution can grasp as part of the fact that THUAS is in an international city, the students' future jobs are in an international context, and staff educate their students to be global citizens. Of note also is how both CU and THUAS have global learning research centres/groups, which have been an important driver within the institutions to examine and question comparative curriculum internationalisation and transformation practices.

It was highlighted how the term 'curriculum transformation' is not commonly used at the AUAS. THUAS also reflected there are differences in how their institution versus individuals engage with the topic. At a personal level it was suggested how transformational learning (c.f. Mezirow 1991, 1995, 1996) is considered more for individuals, particularly students. However, staff seem not so open to their own transformation, or rather perhaps the institution does not seem to address a need for this in staff themselves. Regarding staff development processes, at CU there is an individual appraisal review strategy in place in which internationalisation is included as an organisational goal underpinned by the university capability framework (<https://gpod.orgdev.coventry.domains/capability-framework>). Staff may select this theme as a focus for continued professional development, but unlike previous reviews, there is no mandatory focus to select internationalisation now.

At the AUAS, COIL was specifically mentioned as one of the methods or interventions to scale up the internationalisation efforts and reach all students, requiring an investment in staff development, the interrelatedness and connection of COIL and curriculum internationalisation, the importance to connect multiple stakeholders and to involve educational developers in the process.

### 5.2.3 *Global South-North Similarities*

For all colleagues the round-table discussions, partner meetings and sharing of practices was very revealing and informative in how colleagues' curriculum internationalisation practices are progressing, including the adoption of COIL/VE, which some SA and European universities (e.g. UL, UA) had not previously engaged in.

As well as appreciating a diversity of practices on the move, there were also no shortage of similarities expressed across partners, not least in how COIL is/can be a useful way of internationalising the curriculum because, when designing and facilitating COILs, we can draw examples from our African and European and wider perspective/contexts that offer rich opportunities for curriculum experiences to be influenced. The majority of partners' responses also included how contextual understanding of decolonial issues can be addressed by internationalisation of the curriculum through COIL.

Agreement was also evident concerning the concepts of 'transformation' and as part of curriculum internationalisation, as terms that colleagues are still grappling with, not least as they mean different things to different people (as stated by CUT and THUAS colleagues). Although always diffuse, there tended to be agreement that SA partners are more focused on understanding transformational change at a systemic level, whereas European partners' focus tends to be more on students or staff; in other words, transformation at an individual level.

It was interesting also how CU and the UL shared how some senior leadership feel that significant progress is already made regarding the key concepts and practices as discussed here, whereas academics and students' views may likely differ.

### 5.3 Relationships between key concepts

As previously acknowledged, there has been a keen focus in iKudu in defining key terms from the discourse driving the priorities of our project, e.g. internationalisation of the curriculum, curriculum transformation; internationalisation at home; COIL/VE; decolonisation; inclusivity, etc. and, rather than being viewed as mutually exclusive, we have been striving to appreciate such concepts as interdependent and overlapping. At the same time, we acknowledged the subjectivity of knowledge and also of the understanding of different terminologies, instead of forcing a single definition or description. Therefore we engaged with the concepts in various ways over a period of time, to develop an understanding of how the different concepts relate and are influenced by one another. In the following section we report on how colleagues viewed and made sense of using ways to bridge concepts.

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### 5.3.1 COIL and pluriform perspectives

All colleagues appreciated the focus on decentring western dominance to embrace and celebrate more pluriform (knowledge taking many forms – written, visual/artistic, oral) and pluriverse perspectives (the acknowledgement of many world views/conceptions of the world), with efforts acknowledged across all partners to include increased perspectives within the curriculum. It was acknowledged that COIL partnerships offer an opportunity for these perspectives to be included with rich opportunities to include unheard voices. Indeed, colleagues reiterated that as students engage in COIL, they themselves bring curriculum content through the lens of their local context while also valuing the knowledge they encounter through the exchange with peers. There was acknowledgement that such perspectives are not always easy to appreciate, but that students learn to feel comfortable while being uncomfortable.

### 5.3.2 COIL and I@H/IoC

It was evident how both SA and European partners viewed COIL as part of IoC and I@H by enabling local students to engage with international content and collaborate with their peers across borders. The AUAS mentioned how their university has a large following/commitment to COIL from their Strategic Plan and Internationalisation Strategy to the level of programmes and individual lecturers. iKudu played a role in this development process, showing more lecturers that students do not need to travel in order to have an international experience. Even where partners do not have a well-embedded COIL programme, it is evident COIL was useful as a ‘conversation starter’ for internationalisation of the home curriculum.

### 5.3.3 COIL and Inclusive education

COIL was viewed as an excellent way to realise inclusive internationalisation, and ideally COIL would be part of the compulsory curriculum for every student.

A shared understanding of what we mean by inclusive internationalisation was explained as ‘not leaving anyone behind’. Yet it was noted that partners see how colleagues across universities are implementing I@H and IoC in diverse ways for inclusive internationalisation to occur. For example, there are deliberate programmes that infuse international dimensions into the curriculum. Several partner universities

also have strong backing from senior leadership, but this is not the case everywhere. That said, most partners articulated how Vice-Chancellors and departmental heads are required to commit resources and strategy for staff to then follow for the benefit of students, with each department integrating an internationalisation dimension which is tracked and infused by policy.

It was noted how access and inclusion in the online space for COIL exchange is something iKudu colleagues have researched and published on (Wimpenny et al., 2024) and how it cannot be assumed/taken for granted. A current, part iKudu-inspired project (involving CU and the UFS with a Brazil partner) is focused on appreciating female voices in global South-North COILs.

#### 5.3.4 *COIL-Multi/Inter/Transdisciplinary*

It was noted how COIL can build bridges, not only between cultures of different countries, but also cultures of different academic disciplines and that interdisciplinary COIL exchanges are encouraged. It was argued how COIL/VE can be enriched when used to develop graduate attributes such as critical thinking and problem solving when the work is conducted in more than one discipline (Haug & Jacobs, 2023). The iKudu project has offered multi-/inter- and transdisciplinary ways of conducted COILs with very interesting opportunities and outcomes realised. Even when not engaging multiple disciplines it was felt that COIL work can transcend the disciplinary boundaries towards transdisciplinary outcomes. It was also appreciated that the understanding of the concepts are still not fully recognised and the terms are used interchangeable; e.g. one can mean 'multi', but say 'trans'. Sometimes the terms are used too easily, for instance just assuming that a COIL is transdisciplinary by nature.

#### 5.3.5 *Internationalisation and decolonisation*

Colleagues generally agreed that a curriculum should include pluriform perspectives. Colleagues reflected upon how internationalisation and decolonisation are both about including pluriform and pluriverse perspectives, but that decolonisation calls for broader internationalisation that includes perspectives that have traditionally been excluded not only in the South African context, but in the international knowledge domain. It was also acknowledged that whilst there is persistent focus on decolonising

the curriculum, this is not systematically happening yet. Colleagues also remarked upon how it is important to recognise the need to approach internationalisation and decolonisation of the curriculum not only from a global citizen approach, ensuring that our students are globally competent and locally relevant, but also from a social justice approach. When we talk about the issue of decolonisation and, for that matter, Africanisation, we try to bring in voices that were marginalised in the past. Yet there is also the act of how to incorporate the diverse experiences of students in ways that students understand them. It was noted how iKudu has opened up the perspective of the Global South for students and staff from the Global North, but more – that understanding ourselves and one another grows from working together, and appreciating ourselves and the other. With local cases as examples and local solutions getting equal recognition, a step towards decolonisation is made. Such experiences have served to help inform COIL practices with wider international colleagues that the consortium universities partner with (e.g. Indonesia was mentioned).

### 5.3.6 *Africanisation and Europeanisation*

It was clear that Africanisation was clearly articulated by SA partners as closely linked to decolonisation, but specifically focused on emphasising Africanness, African knowledge and African epistemes, and how it does not seek to exclude other knowledges, but rather wants to take its rightful place. It was interesting that Europeanisation was not so easy a concept to articulate from what is discussed within the field of internationalisation of higher education in the European context. What is the character of Europe now? European colleagues admitted these are terms that need further analysis and defining, and arguably are not particularly well understood or widely used.

### 5.3.7 *Pluriform perspectives & decolonisation*

There was agreement in that using internationalisation/decolonisation offers the broad basis for pluriform perspectives, providing opportunity for multidisciplinary perspectives and approaches in its curriculum designs, moving away from the hegemony of the global North. It was also acknowledged how pluriform perspectives and decolonisation also start with how to make staff aware of how to deal with

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students' different backgrounds and perspectives, and that pluriform perspectives are a way to open the charged discussion on decolonisation.

### 5.3.8 Transformation & decolonisation

It seemed these concepts raised quite different reflections from colleagues who felt unable to answer what transformation really meant for their institution. Responses ranged from how decolonisation was viewed as a form of transformation, to changing the identity of the institution, to a European partner explaining a specific team was tasked to explicitly link transformation to decolonisation, albeit with a limited lifespan, with the efforts and resources developed now handled to Academic Development to refer to and use/build upon. As such, across cases, further evaluation of these terms and the impact of such work to address them are required, as well as their follow-on trajectory.

### 5.3.9 IoC/I@H & global citizenship education

Colleagues here spoke about how IoC and I@H are overlapping concepts and processes of embedding international and intercultural dimensions into curricula and using pedagogies that leverage inclusivity in diverse ways. Global citizenship education was articulated as equipping students with the competences and agency to address 'g/local' challenges and to contribute to building a more just and sustainable world. When considering how to achieve those aims, IoC/I@H interventions and processes can be used for intentional curriculum design bringing in internationalised and interculturalized content, interactions, and engagement with different contexts. IoC and I@H can be important tools for global citizenship education, but there needs to be an intentional educational approach in respect of this. It was, in general terms, agreement that an international curriculum broadens the notion of citizenship and inclusion for students.

### 5.3.10 Internationalisation & equality/equity, diversity, inclusion (EDI)

This is a theme of value across the partners, with colleagues sharing how the values of an internationalised curriculum should relate to inclusion and diversity agendas, and how this is to be found in institutional policy. However, it was not always evident how colleagues could evidence that such practices take place. At CU it may seem that EDI

and internationalisation are viewed as two separate things with not much crossover. A valuable example from the AUAS was offered, is how the university strives to create dialogue between students from Russia and Ukraine, and from Israel and Gaza who are all studying at the university. The AUAS offer training to lecturers on not being afraid to address sensitive topics and to help maintain equality amongst the diverse student groups.

### 5.3.11 Curriculum Transformation & Involving I@H/IoC

Responses here included how the goals of Curriculum Transformation as linked to I@H/IoC may be similar, but the roads towards the goals can differ per study programme. I@H and IoC are viewed as essential aspects of curriculum transformation. An acknowledgement was that there is not a one-size-fits-all approach as mentioned by the UFS, where it was noted that governance structures ensure room for their diverse people with different ideas and different routes to achieving transformation through curriculum internationalisation. It was also noted how challenges exist in the curriculum in the South African context through I@H and IoC, as related to the inclusion of perspectives from regions in the global South. It also seems that each concept has power to influence the other – for example, one participant in the survey reflected that “once the value of I@H is understood, and the value that it has, it changes the mindset of the stakeholders.”

### 5.3.12 Decolonisation & Africanisation

It was evident from the partner responses that these concepts relate, and that Africanisation may go hand in hand with decolonisation. Indeed, the terms have been used interchangeably at SA universities. Through decolonising processes, missing narratives, knowledges and approaches can be identified, which through Africanisation can be brought back into academia and curricula. It was also apparent that Africanisation was appreciated to be focused mainly on African perspectives, while decolonisation focuses on knowledge from the global south, not only Africa.

Ways in which the experience of the local community is embraced were also felt by SA partners to be important to contextualise the curriculum. This was voiced less so from the European partners. It is interesting to understand how these concepts currently

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have a direct impact on curriculums. There may be pockets of good practice that are not circulated well for wider appreciation.

## 5.4 Summary and Conclusion

This reflective report has detailed the interdependent processes of curriculum internationalisation and transformation at the partner universities over the lifetime of the iKudu project. In particular, the interpretations of key concepts such as curriculum internationalisation and transformation at the partner universities have been examined in order to appreciate and understand institutional through to personal practices, perspectives and needs better. Importantly, the context-specific internationalisation and transformation of the curriculum practices across the SA and European consortium partners have been considered in terms of overlap and distinguishing features. This relates not least to how the partner universities are conceptually connecting the concepts of Africanisation and Europeanisation with internationalisation and other relevant concepts.

Whilst institutional policy statements may say a lot, and could mean a lot to some, this does not necessarily lead to curriculum development in practice (for all). There has been a lot to reflect upon, considering the multiple perspectives and scope addressed in our four-year project.

Certainly, it seems iKudu came at an interesting time for many partners and not the least considering the global pandemic. As such, there is a sense of practice always on the move, as well as periods of instability. iKudu has helped to provide some important space for reflection, discussion, and stability during the project lifetime. It is evident iKudu has provided important levers universities have used to engage in dialogue (again) with senior leadership and academics 'on the ground'. Momentum has certainly been offered from the project to partners in helping to keep conversations.

What is clear is how a lot have been achieved, and much is yet still to be done in terms of top-down and bottom up practices. That said, the delegations present in Durban with colleagues from diverse Departments/Schools/Centres/etc. demonstrate the institutional commitments to curriculum internationalisation and transformation, and within that COIL.

Some level of progress has been made by all partners across very diverse/different institutions. As new staff continue to arrive at our universities, advocacy for this programme is important as part of new Staff Induction (to the new academics) and in sustaining the COILs through recruiting new academics to the programme.

iKudu has had a large impact on the partners' research into COIL and I@H. For example, published COIL research (see Chapter 6 for a synthesis of the published project outputs) has enabled colleagues to engage better in dialogue with the university to reinforce why, for example, I@H and COIL are valuable and necessary activities to resource and develop/sustain.

It was acknowledged that institutions do not change fast. Changes can often be piecemeal at any moment in time. But change does happen with persistence. Over the four-year period since the iKudu kick-off, certain terminology, including COIL, I@H and IoC are becoming part of the "jargon" used at the partner institutions where it was not, even if a lot is still needed.

Whilst the Erasmus funding fundamentally is focused on staff capacity building, students have been our ultimate focus in how they experience the curriculum and especially the COIL exchanges. It has thus been important and interesting to reflect on how the concepts are understood and experienced with students, which has been the focus of the analysis of WG2 and is reported on in Chapters 10 and 11.

iKudu has led to limited structural changes, but has brought many useful insights and contexts which will need to be taken forward. The iKudu project has contributed to individual shifts amongst those that joined the iKudu journey. The conversations and the work must still continue for curriculum internationalisation to flourish.

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## CHAPTER 6: A SYNTHESIS OF THE IKUDU RESEARCH OUTPUTS AVAILABLE

### Commitment 6

Publications will follow workshops and symposia.

### Delivered

At least 23 peer-reviewed manuscripts were published during this time. Furthermore, at least 22 opinion pieces were published as blog posts, web content or professional magazines, were written, 17 webinars were presented, and 21 conference papers were presented.

### Abstract

This chapter discusses a synthesis of the iKudu research outputs disseminated during the main project period of November 2019-May 2024, with an acknowledgement that the synthesis may not account for all published outputs during that time frame due to the widespread scope of dissemination that occurred, and which continues to occur / be active. While the intention and process for capturing all dissemination was in place, keeping track of all the partners' various outputs was a considerable (and impressively positive) task. The synthesis presents the range and type of outputs in relation to peer-reviewed, co-authored, and sole-authored research papers, webinars hosted, and conference papers and/or proceedings, and keynote addresses delivered. Blogs were of particular value and were mainly written during the global pandemic years. Outputs published in professional magazines and other media of repute are also mentioned. Colleagues who have embarked upon and completed their doctoral studies related to the focus of iKudu are included. A thematic reflective grouping of the outputs is then shared prior to a concluding section reiterating the commitment of the iKudu consortium partners to share the learning from our project and its research as aligned with the project aims and deliverables; the intention being that the sharing of such learning and ways of knowing was both ethically responsible and a central practice of the project to ensure that the wider international education community could engage. A reference section at the end of the piece details all the outputs included in the synthesis.

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**Key words:** COIL, research, synthesis, practice

## 6.1 Introduction

At the outset of the iKudu project, it was evident that partners were invested in research. There was a commitment to conducting robust studies over the project's lifetime that could serve as evidence of the consortium's efforts, aligned with the project deliverables, and with the opportunity for such knowledge to be shared with the wider international education community.

Project partner events, starting at the 'project kick-off' meeting at the UFS, to the most recent March 2024 conference at Coventry University, have nurtured an ever-growing community of practice of early career researchers to senior colleagues, all working together on ways to think through, plan, discuss, and capture ways to map the project progress as it occurred. This report brings together a synthesis of these many and varied research outputs to date.

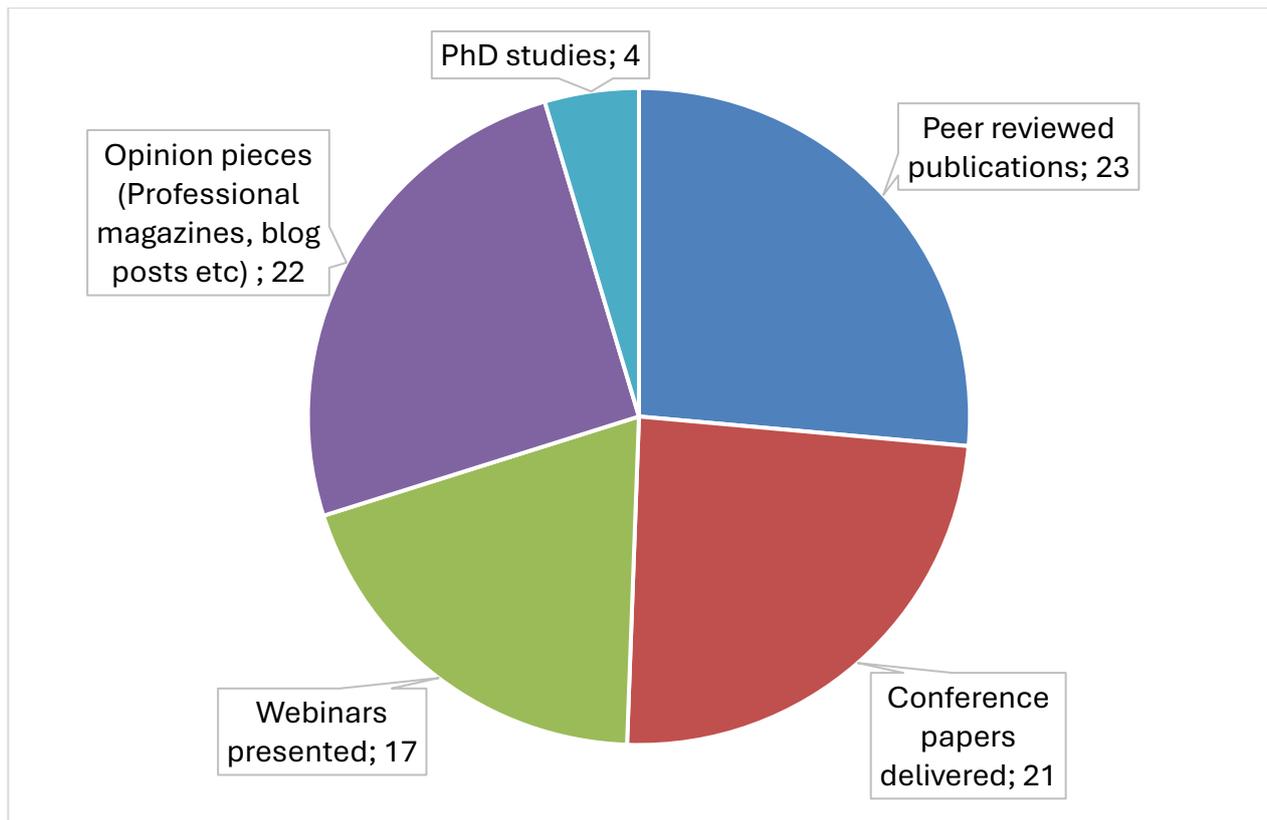
This overview includes outputs that discuss – in part or in full – the iKudu project or its components, as well as outputs authored by iKudu project members, which discuss virtual exchange and COIL in a wider context. These outputs<sup>15</sup> indicate the increasing presence of iKudu authors in the field.

## 6.2 Synthesis of Outputs

Figure 15 provides numbers relating to specific types of outputs.

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<sup>15</sup> It is acknowledged that this report may not account for all published outputs to date; apologies to any iKudu colleague whose work is not mentioned here. The scope of dissemination has been truly widespread and active, and keeping track of all outputs is a continuing process.



**Figure 15: Range of outputs during the lifetime of the project<sup>16</sup>**

### 6.3 Peer-reviewed outputs

As can be seen in Figure 15, there were 23 peer-reviewed co-authored and sole-authored research papers, with publication dates spanning May 2021-May 2024.

In terms of specific journals profiled, the list includes:

- *Perspectives in Education*
- *Higher Education Research & Development*
- *Journal of Studies in International Education*
- *International Journal of Development Education and Global Learning*
- *International Journal of Academic Development*
- *Religions*
- *Journal for ReAttach Therapy and Developmental Diversities*

<sup>16</sup> It is acknowledged that this graphical representation may not account for all published and presented outputs to date. Apologies to any iKudu colleague whose work is not included here.

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- *The Journal of Language Teaching and Technology*
  - *Symbiosis eXpress International Education (online)*
  - *Policy Futures in Education*

These journals include Q1, high-impact, international education research-specific journals across South Africa and Europe, to journals with a more specific disciplinary practice-based focus. The point here is that the iKudu research is shared in the arenas in which partners felt most appropriate for targeting readership and particular learning communities.

In terms of peer-reviewed co-authored book chapters, several have been published as part of edited collections; three chapters in Rubin and Guth (2022). Another chapter was part of a European Association for International Education (EAIE) collection/series. Another chapter was part of an edited book on digital learning and new technologies in the internationalisation of higher education: universities in the information age, as part of the Routledge series on Internationalisation in Higher Education. The effort here has again been to ensure that written outputs are visible in the most topical/relatable collections and/or professional bodies, with direct relationship and readership to the iKudu aims and strategy.

## 6.4 Webinars

Regarding webinars, 17 were delivered across a range of settings, including 10 hosted by a university partner (8 across the iKudu partner HEIs)

- four at Coventry University
- two at the University of the Free State
- two at DUT
- one at the University of Denver, US
- one at the Symbiosis International University, India

Four of the webinars were hosted by a professional learning community (RIHE; EAIE; AIEA; ACE – American Council on Education), with a further webinar at the UFS focusing more on policy dialogue, with Berto Bosscha, Education and Science Attaché at the Dutch Embassy in Pretoria, and Dr Idah Makukule.

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## 6.5 Conference Papers / Proceedings, Keynotes

Twenty-one papers were presented at the following conference events:

### 2020

- Conference of the Association of International Education Administrators – Engaging Emergent COIL: Virtual Exchange Initiatives in Japan, Europe and South Africa, (AIEA) 17-19 February 2020
- British Educational Research Association (BERA), 8-10 September 2020
- International Virtual Exchange Conference (IVEC), Newcastle University, UK, 14 September 2020
- Two papers at Africa Knows! Conference, Leiden University, 2-4 December 2020
- Emerging Communities of Practice of Virtual Exchange/COIL Across the Globe, the American Council on Education, December 2020
- Association of Commonwealth Universities on COIL and Virtual Exchange, Association of Commonwealth Universities, December 2020

### 2021

- Three papers at National Association of Distance Education and Open Learning in South Africa (NADEOSA) Conference, 11-13 May 2021
- LatAm COIL Conference, ‘COIL in and with Latin America at a time of change’, Universidad Veracruzana, 16 June 2021
- Bulgarian Comparative Education Society (BCES) Conference, 22 June 2021
- IVEC 2021, New York, US, 29 October 2021

### 2022

- Two papers at IVEC 2022, 28 October 2022
- VIS (visualisation and visual analytics) Conference 2022, 29 November 2022
- *The Third International Conference on Learning and Teaching in the Digital World*. An-Najah University, Palestine, 9 May 2022, ‘Inclusive collaborative online international pedagogies: online conversations on digital higher education’.

### 2023

- The RISG Biennial Research and Innovation Dialogue 2023, Universities South Africa (USAf) Higher Education Conference, 21-22 Sept 2023
- 25th Annual International Education Association of South Africa Conference (IEASA) Conference: Looking back, looking forward, 20-25 Aug 2023
- *iKudu: Sustainable capacity development for curriculum transformation through internationalisation using Collaborative Online International Learning*, Multi-Inter-Transdisciplinary Conference on Africa Transformation Perspectives, theme: 'The Africa we want: Stimulating Transformation, Development and Sustainability through MIT Reflections', Walter Sisulu University, South Africa, 19-21 April 2023 IVEC – International Virtual Exchange Conference, Universidade Estadual Paulist, Brazil, 31 October 2023

These papers were co-authored in all cases, and again represent a very diverse partnership of ECRs with more senior colleagues. Conference papers have also been a useful method of dissemination, offering opportunity for presenters to learn from the Q&A sessions as part of presentation feedback loops and the ensuing discussion. Conference papers thus helped pave the way for authors to submit full paper write-ups to educational journals, and/or with visibility in conference proceedings thereafter. iKudu papers have been most frequently accepted and presented at IVEC, EAIE, and NADEOSA.

It is worth noting that in 2022, there were more limited conference presentations, which links directly to the impact of COVID-19 and the global pandemic that severely limited opportunities for larger conference events to take place. Nonetheless, during 2021-2022, iKudu colleagues remained committed to dissemination, and as the next sections evidence, the use of blogs and webinars illustrates how iKudu continued to focus on knowledge sharing and ways to reach out and connect (with) colleagues.

## 6.6 Blogs

Blogs were of particular value and were mainly written during the global pandemic years (24 April 2020-May 2021). Eleven blogs have been published on the iKudu website (<https://www.ufs.ac.za/ikudu/ikudu-blogs/Transforming-Curricula-through-Internationalisation-and-Virtual-Exchanges>), offering personal takes on different strands of the iKudu effort and from very varied stakeholder/partner perspectives, e.g.,

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from a university COIL co-ordinator to the student voice, to our beloved expert adviser Merle Hodges (RIP).

Five additional blogs were published outside the project by the European Association for international Education (EAIE) (Beelen & De Louw, 2020; De Louw et al., 2021; O'Dowd & Beelen, 2021; Van Hove, 2019; Van Hove 2021).

## 6.7 Professional Magazine /Other

Fourteen wider forms of dissemination also took place, again in a strategic effort to spread the learning from the project to diverse audiences. For example, the following:

- One article published in *University World News, Africa* (Wimpenny et al, 2021)
- One paper published as part of an *EAIE Forum* thought piece (Klamer et al., 2021)
- One article in the *EAIE Pathways to practice series* (Haug & Beelen, 2023)
- Another EAIE article focuses on ingredients for online international classrooms (De Louw, E, Ambagts, M, Haug, E, & Hackett, S. (18 May 2021)
- Fifteen synthesis reports, co-authored across the ten partner universities, have been written for the European Funding Commission as part of the final iKudu project reporting (such as the current one). These reports will also come together as the Conference Proceedings for presentation 6-8 May 2024 at the final iKudu Conference hosted at the UFS and will be available on the iKudu website.

## 6.8 Postgraduate Study

Finally, we were very pleased to have four postgraduate researchers – Cornelius Hagenmeier, Divinia Jithoo, Lize Mari Mitchell, and Mark Dawson (respectively completed, mid-way, and nearing completion) – working on their PhDs during the project lifetime.

Cornelius Hagenmeier, who was based at the University of the Free State for most of the time and now serves at Mittweida University of Applied Sciences in Germany, completed his study titled *Equality in Higher Education Partnerships: Defining the concept in divergent contexts*, and graduated in 2021. His supervisor was Prof Evance

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Kalula from the University of Cape Town, and his co-supervisor was Prof Hans de Wit from Boston College.

Divinia Jithoo is based at DUT; her thesis was titled *Structural Dynamics of Leadership in Current Intra-African Higher Education Collaborative Research Teams: The Case of Selected South African Research-based Universities*. Her thesis was supervised by Prof Patricio Langa of the Institute for Post-School Studies at the University of the Western Cape and co-supervised by Professor Emeritus, Prof Peter Cunningham of Nelson Mandela University.

Lize-Mari Mitchell was originally based at the University of Limpopo and later moved to the Netherlands where she is studying for her doctorate at the University of Humanistic Studies in the Netherlands, supervised by a professor who is a Research Fellow at the UFS. Her thesis, which she is halfway through, is titled *Internationalisation of Higher Education within the Neoliberal Paradigm: A Critical Analysis of the Relationship between Intercultural Competence and COIL Virtual Exchange programmes*.

Mark Dawson is based at Coventry University and is studying for a full-time PhD, titled *What are the mechanisms that influence how stakeholders experience Collaborative Online International Learning: A Critical Realist appraisal*. Mark's PhD was an awarded studentship designed as a collaboration between Prof K Wimpenny (CU) and Prof Jos Beelen, (THUAS, Visiting Prof, CU). Both supervisors are iKudu colleagues with Dr Que Anh Dang (CU). Mark aims to complete his PhD in the spring-summer of 2024.

## 6.9 Reflection and Thematic Areas

### 6.9.1 Cross-institutional curriculum transformation

It is interesting to see how the publications collate the new insights which have been developed as a result of the project. Titles of the outputs can be grouped thematically to illustrate this. For example, considering the ambition of the iKudu project to target cross-institutional curriculum transformation practices and the required educational leadership and resources/structures to enable quality education. An analysis of the output related to this is focused on international multidisciplinary collaboration and ways of fostering diverse cultural perspectives through COIL exchange (e.g., De Santi et

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al., 2022). Two of the authors involved in the iKudu COIL presented in the paper are members of the UL/US consortium.

### 6.9.2 *Embracing Diversity of Perspectives*

Further analyses of the outputs feature themes embracing communication and interaction, plural ways of knowing, and the richness that comes from sharing diversity of perspectives e.g., *Knowing, Being, Relating and Expressing and COIL* (Wimpenny et al., 2022); *Using diversity to contribute to equality-centred COILs* (DeWinter & Klamer, 2021).

Two research publications relate to intercultural competence and COILs (Hackett, et al., 2023, and Mitchel, 2023).

### 6.9.3 *COIL Design*

The outputs also reflect the set-up, planning, facilitation, and impact of COIL exchanges. Here, titles included: *Getting started with COIL* (Haug & Beelen, 2023); *The design of COIL tasks in the online classroom* (De Louw et al., 2021).

Two outputs in particular, related to *Possible Solutions for Teaching Large Classes* (De Santi, et al., 2022) and *Taking COIL Virtual Exchange to Scale* (Rubin, et al., 2022), link well with institutional integration, including how the participating universities were each on their own trajectory considering their curriculum internationalisation practices, as well as being part of a community of practice through the shared learning and collaboration in COIL.

Finally, themes of research outputs can be seen in how the collaborative tasks within COIL exchange related to topical / contemporary educational practices, for example, *COIL as a borderland third space for global citizenship education*, (Wimpenny et al, 2023). Alignment with other internationalisation components in a study programme was also discussed (Beelen et al., 2021; Beelen & Doscher, 2022).

## 6.10 Decentring Western / Global North perspectives

A further cluster of publications engages with decolonisation of teaching and learning (Wimpenny et al, 2021a; b). Some of these were published and presented at the Africa

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Knows! Conference at Leiden University (2021-2022), which focused on ‘decolonising minds.’

Co-authored work stands out across publications, and in particular within this theme. One paper (Jacobs, L. et al., 2021) included writing reflective responses to five questions over five days – a Global South-North coming together of 14 authors who were able to write one research paper yet bringing in rich global South African-European perspectives, and not least considering how partners have worked to appreciate use of key concepts / terms. Sole authored work was nonetheless also prevalent and illustrates the power of the individual voice. One of our sole authors (Lize-Mari) is also completing her PhD thesis and it is commendable that this colleague was able to publish research papers during her doctoral study. Mark Dawson also has supported research papers at IVEC and is a co-author of the paper with Wimpenny et al. (2024), which is currently under review. As mentioned, the range, spread, and reach of the outputs and audience engagement should also be noted and was a considered strategy.

## 6.11 Conclusion

In summary, this synthesis reports on the outputs that colleagues from across the 10 partner institutions have authored during the timeline of the project. These outputs indicate the increasing presence of iKudu authors in the field and the value that the study offers and presents in the public discourse.

It is also recognised that this report may not account for all the outputs in the public domain, as some partners’ papers, blogs, webinars, and keynotes may have been unintentionally missed. It is also generally the case that writing up articles / papers, etc. occurs at the end of a project. We know already that there are more outputs to come, as there are already several in development / in the pipeline. We are pleased that the iKudu website will remain live, providing the opportunity for all outputs to be shared / listed and profiled, with new outputs being uploaded as appropriate.

It is also worth empathising/restating that the publications not only share learning across our international education community, but are also being used to underpin our reputation, track record, and expertise when applying for next stage grants to further the work of iKudu. We have not listed the grants submitted, nor those in the pipeline,

but this is a key area of focus and grants have been applied for and will continue to be applied for. This commitment to pursue project work is not least due to the strength of commitment and strength of ties that the iKudu partnership has yielded. We are very proud of how the project has led to such fruitful and active research partnerships linked to programmes, research publications, PhD studentships, visiting fellows, wider networks of colleagues, as well as the continuous professional development we have experienced from being involved, and from early career to seasoned researchers.

What follows is a list of peer-reviewed publications, blog posts and other forms of dissemination. We acknowledge that the list may not be complete, as other publications may have been published since the analysis was done.

## 6.12 Peer-reviewed publications

### 2024

Wimpenny, K, Jacobs, L, Dawson, M, Hagenmeier, C (2024). The potential of collaborative online international learning as a borderland third space for global citizenship education. *International Journal of Development Education and Global Learning*, 16 (1):29-42. <https://doi.org/10.14324/IJDEGL.16.1.03>.

Wimpenny, K, Jacobs, L et al. (2024). Connectedness and communal thinking in a virtual borderland: Flourishing against the Normative, In J Ulmer, C Hughes, M Salazar Pérez, and CA Taylor (Eds). *Routledge International Handbook of Transdisciplinary Feminist Research and Methodological Praxis*, (pp. 273-284) London: Routledge.

### 2023

Beelen, J (2023). Internationalisation at home and virtual exchange: addressing old and erroneous approaches. In F Hunter, R Ammigan, H de Wit, J Gregersen-Hermans, E Jones & A Murphy (Eds.) *Internationalisation in higher education: Responding to new opportunities and challenges. Ten years of research at the Centre for Higher Education Internationalisation (CHEI)*, (pp. 101-112). Educatt.

Bosman, G, Venter, A & Mabe, P (2023). Litema activism: Community-engaged scholarship with international online learning. *Acta Structilia*, 30(1), 186-212. <https://doi.org/10.38140/as.v30i1.7336>.

- Hackett, S, Janssen, J, Beach, P, Perreault, M, Beelen, J, & Van Tartwijk, J (2023). The effectiveness of Collaborative International Learning (COIL) on intercultural competence development in higher education. *International Journal of Educational Technology in Higher Education*, 20:5 <https://doi.org/10.1186/s41239-022-00373-3>.
- Haug, E, & Jacobs, L (2023). The design of collaborative online internationalised learning (COIL). In Hunter, F, Ammigan, R, De Wit, H, Gregersen-Hermans, J, Jones, E, and Murphy, AC (Eds.) *Internationalisation in higher education: Responding to new opportunities and challenges. Ten years of research by the Centre for Higher Education Internationalisation (CHEI)*. (pp. 143-156). Milano: EDUCatt. <https://libri.educatt.online/books/CHEI/ebook-CHEI.pdf>.
- Khoza, NG & Qumbisa, N (2023). Using Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) as Means for Internationalization: Reflections from Academics. *Docens Series in Education*, 5, 81-92 <https://www.docensjournal.org/index.php/docens/article/view/36>.
- Kotze, B & Swart, AJ (2023). Possible Solutions for Teaching Large Classes in a Dynamic Educational Landscape. *Journal for ReAttach Therapy and Developmental Diversity*, 6(10): 706-710.
- Mitchell, LM (2023). Intercultural Competence: Higher Education Internationalisation at the Crossroads of Neoliberal, Cultural and Religious Social Imaginaries. *MDPI*, 14(6), 801; <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14060801>.
- Naicker, A (2023). Sustaining opportunities and mutual partiality through Collaborative Online International Learning in South Africa, *Policy Futures in Education*, 22(3), 1–10 <https://doi.org/10.1177/14782103231176359>.

## 2022

- Beelen, J, & Doscher, S (2022). Situating COIL Virtual Exchange within concepts of internationalization. In J Rubin & S Guth (Eds.), *The guide to COIL Virtual Exchange* (pp. 44-63). Stylus Publishing.
- Buntru, T, García Portillo, B, Rodríguez Luna, V, Biondo Salomão, AC, Succi, O, Celso Freire, J, Hackett, S, Haug, E, Ikeda, K, Onorevole, VM, Samuels, L, Rajah, V & Mitchell, L (2022). COIL Country Focus. In J Rubin & S Guth (Eds.), *The Guide to COIL Virtual Exchange: Implementing, Growing, and Sustaining Collaborative Online International Learning*. Stylus Publishing LLC.

De Santi, C, DeBoer, M, Bosman, G, & Citter, C (2022). International Multidisciplinary Collaboration on Four Continents: An Experiment in Fostering Diverse Cultural Perspectives, *Journal of Language and Teaching Technology*, 4, 1-18. <https://italian.rutgers.edu/docman-lister/pdf-documents/327-dei-essay-coil-4-december-16-finale/file>

George, V, Jacobs, L & Hodges, M. 2022. Virtual Monitoring and Evaluation of Capacity Development in Higher Education Projects: Lessons for the Future. In N Popov, C Wolhuter, L de Beer, G Hilton, J Ogunleye, E Achinewhu-Nworgu & E Niemczyk (Eds), *Towards the Next Epoch of Education, BCES Conference Books*, 20, pp. 25-31. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED622685.pdf>

Rubin, J & Wimpenny, K, Garcia, et al. (2022). Taking COIL Virtual Exchange to Scale: 2004-2020, In J Rubin & S Guth (Eds.), *The Guide to COIL Virtual Exchange: Implementing, Growing, and Sustaining Collaborative Online International Learning* (pp 152-184). Stylus Publishing LLC.

Wimpenny, K, Finardi, K, Orsini-Jones, M & Jacobs, L (2022). Knowing, Being, Relating and Expressing through Global South-North Third Space COIL: Digital Inclusion and Equity in International Higher Education. *Journal of Studies in International Education: Special Issue on Digitalisation* , 26(2), 279-296 <https://doi.org/10.1177/10283153221094085>

## 2021

Adefila, A, Arrobbio, O, Brown, G, Robinson, Z, Spolander, G, Soliev, I, Willers, B, Morini, L, Padovan, D & Wimpenny, K (2021). Ecologized Collaborative Online International Learning: Tackling Wicked Sustainability Problems through Education for Sustainable Development, *Journal of Teacher Education for Sustainability* 23 (1) 41-57. <https://doi.org/10.2478/jtes-2021-0004>.

Beelen, J, Wimpenny, K & Rubin, J (2021). Internationalisation in the classroom and questions of alignment: Embedding COIL in an internationalised curriculum. In P Nixon, V Dennen & R Rawal (Eds.). *Digital learning and new technologies in the internationalisation of higher education; Universities in the information age* (pp. 29-45). London: Routledge.

DeWinter, A, & Klamer, R (2021). Can COIL be effective in using diversity to contribute to equality? Experiences of iKudu, a European-South African consortium operating via a decolonised approach to project delivery. In M Satar (Ed.), *Virtual exchange: towards digital equity in internationalisation* (pp. 29-40). Research-publishing.net. <https://doi.org/10.14705/rpnet.2021.53.1287>.

Jacobs, L, Wimpenny, K, Mitchell, L, Hagenmeier, C, Beelen, J, Hodges, M, George, V, DeWinter, A, Slambee, C, Obadire, S, Viviani, A, Samuels, L, Jackson, L, Klamer, R, & Adam, N (2021). Adapting a capacity-development-in-higher-education project: Doing, being and becoming virtual collaboration. *Perspectives in Education*, 39(1), 353-371. <https://doi.org/10.18820/2519593X/pie.v39.i1.22>.

Wimpenny, K, Beelen, J, Hindrix, K, King, V & Sjoer, E (2021a). Curriculum internationalization and the 'decolonizing academic', *Higher Education Research & Development* <http://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2021.2014406>.

## **2020**

Wimpenny, K & Orsini-Jones, M (2020). Innovation in Collaborative Online International Learning: A Holistic Blend, In D Burgos (Ed) *Radical Solutions and eLearning: Practical Innovations and Online Educational Technology* (pp. 1-5) Springer: Singapore. <https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-981-15-4952-6>.

## **2019**

Wimpenny, K, Beelen, J, & King, V (2019). Academic development to support the internationalization of the curriculum (IoC): A *qualitative research synthesis*. *International Journal of Academic Development*, 41(7), 2490-2505. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/07294360.2021.2014406>.

## **6.13 Professional journals, blog posts and more**

A number of blog posts appears on the [iKudu website](#). In addition to these, the following serves as examples of what has been published in professional journals and other platforms.

## **2023**

Haug, E, & Beelen, J (2023). *Getting started with Virtual Exchange/COIL (Pathways to practice)*. EAIE. <https://www.eaie.org/resource/getting-started-with-ve-coil.html>

## **2021**

Beelen, J & Van Staplele, N (2021). Towards the new exclusive in internationalisation. *Symbiosis Express International Education*, (Diversity, equity and inclusion in internationalisation of higher education), 4, 19-22.

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De Louw, E, Ambagts, M, Haug, E & Hackett, S (18 May 2021). 6 Ingredients for online international classrooms. <https://www.eaie.org/blog/6-ingredients-online-international-classrooms.html>.

O'Dowd, R & Beelen, J (7 September 2021). Virtual exchange and internationalisation at home navigating the terminology. <https://www.eaie.org/blog/virtual-exchange-iah-terminology.html>.

Van Hove, P (23 September 2021). Words matter: why we should stop talking about 'virtual mobility'. <https://www.eaie.org/resource/words-matter-virtual-mobility.html>.

Klamer, R, Mitchell, L-M, & Wimpenny, K (2021). iKudu: stronger together. *Forum* (spring edition) 11-13.

Mitchell, L-M, Klamer, R, Jacobs, L, Wimpenny, K & Hagenmeier, C (2021). Rethinking internationalisation between South Africa and Europe to use existing diversity as a source for new partnerships and internationalisation for all, *Forum EAIE*.

Wimpenny, K, Hagenmeier, C, Jacobs, L & Beelen, J (21 January 2021b). Decolonisation through inclusive virtual collaboration. *University World News, Africa* <https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20210121054345601>.

## **2020**

Beelen, J & De Louw, E (28 January 2020). Internationalisation at home: Past, present and future. <https://www.eaie.org/blog>.

## **2019**

Van Hove, P (9 November 2019). COIL: what's in an acronym? <https://www.eaie.org/blog>

## **6.14 Examples of conference papers delivered**

Aarlie, H, Jacobs, L & Beelen, J. 2023. 'North-South collaborations within a critical internationalisation framework'. *Impact and innovation – Effects of higher education development collaboration. Cooperation for Sustainable Development in Higher Education Group Forum 2023*. Oslo, 8-10 November 2023.

- Reinout Klamer, Divinia Jithoo, Eva Haug, Lize-Mari-Mitchell. 'How to truly collaborate. Using lessons learned from iKudu'. *IVEC 2022 CEU, Spain* <https://www.iveconference.org> 28 October 2022.
- Wimpenny, K. 'Inclusive collaborative online international pedagogies, Online conversations on digital higher education'. *The third International Conference on Learning and Teaching in the Digital World*. An-Najah University, Palestine, 9 May 2022.
- Klamer, R, & DeWinter, A. 'African-European partnerships: experiences of academic staff in new COIL exchanges between South Africa and Europe'. *Africa knows! Conference*. <https://www.africaknows.eu/papH50-03.htm> 3 December 2021.
- Beelen, J, Hagenmeier, C, Jacobs, L & Wimpenny, K. 'From COIL to curriculum transformation in South Africa'. *Africa knows! Conference*. <https://www.africaknows.eu/papH50-02.htm> 3 December 2021.
- DeWinter, A, Klamer, R, Wimpenny, K, Haug, E, Samuels, L, Beelen, J. 2021. 'iKudu - How COIL can be used to harness difference to promote educational inclusivity and to embed COIL in universities. Experiences of European and South African Institutions through the iKudu project'. Symposium at the *Third Annual International Virtual Exchange Conference (IVEC)*, 26-29 October 2021, Online ([https://whova.com/embedded/session/ivec\\_202110/1955671/](https://whova.com/embedded/session/ivec_202110/1955671/)).
- Presentation 3: Jacobs, L & DeWinter, A. 'COIL as true co-creation'.
  - Panel discussion: Beelen, J, Jacobs, L, Samuels, L & Wimpenny, K. 'Integrating COIL in the curriculum, Narratives from iKudu consortium universities'.
- Kekana-Mlambo, N & Jacobs, L. 2021. 'Using an Appreciative Inquiry lens to re-imagine internationalisation: Towards policy renewal', *23<sup>rd</sup> Annual IEASA Conference (Virtual)*, 25-27 August 2021.
- Hagenmeier, C, Jacobs, L & Jooste, N. 'Using principles of COIL to advance comprehensive internationalisation of higher education: A policy perspective'. *NADEOSA Virtual Conference, Preparing for the future: Shaping Open Distance and eLearning in the Post School Education and Training*, 11-13 May 2021.
- Slambee, C. 'Coordinating support for COIL capacity-building project by doing everything online: An iKudu case study.' *NADEOSA Virtual Conference, Preparing for the future: Shaping Open Distance and eLearning in the Post School Education and Training*, 11-13 May 2021.

Jacobs, Lynette. Panellist on 'Sustainable development - education in the face of global crises' at the 2021 *Internationalization Summit: Sustaining Internationalization: The Next Decade of Global Engagement* <https://www.du.edu/intz/summit> University of Denver, 16 April 2021.

Wimpenny, K, Beelen, J, Hagenmeier, C, Jacobs, L. 'iKudu - Transforming Curricula through Internationalisation and Virtual Exchanges?' Teacher/Practitioner Researcher Paper. *British Education Research Association (BERA)*, hosted at University of Liverpool <https://www.bera.ac.uk/conference/bera-conference-2020/abstract-submission> 8-10 September 2020.

Samuels, L. 'The global launch of DUT Toolkit on International Virtual Engagement and COIL', *Association of Commonwealth Universities on COIL and virtual exchange* Association of Commonwealth Universities, December 2020.

## 6.15 Examples of dissemination through news posts

### 2024

*Coventry University supports global effort to transform learning through collaborative international experiences* (Wednesday 7 August 2024) <https://www.coventry.ac.uk/primary-news/coventry-university-supports-global-effort-to-transform-learning-through-collaborative-international-experiences/>

*Adding an international element to preparing students for the world* (25 April 2024) <https://www.ufs.ac.za/templates/news-archive/campus-news/2024/april/adding-an-international-element-to-preparing-students-for-the-world>

*iKudu Closing Conference* (2024) <https://research.hva.nl/en/activities/ikudu-closing-conference>

*Future of COIL discussed at iKudu closing conference* (28 May 2024) <https://www.ufs.ac.za/templates/news-archive/campus-news/2024/may/future-of-coil-discussed-at-ikudu-closing-conference>

### 2023

*Global engagement sheds light on curriculum internationalisation and transformation* (9 October 2023) <https://www.ufs.ac.za/templates/news-archive/campus->

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[news/2023/october/global-engagement-sheds-light-on-curriculum-internationalisation-and-transformation](https://www.thu.nl/en/news/2023/october/global-engagement-sheds-light-on-curriculum-internationalisation-and-transformation)

*On a knowledge mission in South Africa* (14 November 2023) <https://www.thu.nl/en/about-thu/news/knowledge-mission-south-africa>

*UFS publishes document that aids universities to internationalise the curriculum* (11 July 2023) <https://www.ufs.ac.za/templates/news-archive/campus-news/2023/july/ufs-publishes-document-that-aids-universities-to-internationalise-the-curriculum>

*Virtual South African-Dutch Internationalisation and Higher Education Collaboration* (16 February 2023) <https://www.ufs.ac.za/templates/news-archive/campus-news/2023/february/virtual-south-african-dutch-internationalisation-and-higher-education-collaboration>

## 2022

*UFS South Campus impacting lives for the better on international stage* (3 May 2022) <https://www.ufs.ac.za/templates/news-archive/campus-news/2022/may/ufs-south-campus-impacting-lives-for-the-better-on-international-stage>

*Welcome speech at the iKudu site visit to The Hague University of Applied Sciences* (13 June 2022:) <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/13-june-2022-welcome-speech-ikudu-site-visit-hague-applied-jos-beelen/>

## 2021

*iKudu: Transforming Curricula Through Internationalisation and Virtual Exchanges* <https://www.amsterdamuas.com/faculty/fbe/shared-content/projects/projects-general/ikudu.html?ga=2.39010467.1861115075.1706188657-1155979623.1623681779>

*UFS partners in programme that promotes internationalisation and virtual exchanges* (16 July 2021) <https://www.ufs.ac.za/templates/news-archive/campus-news/2021/july/ufs-partners-in-programme-that-promotes-internationalisation-and-virtual-exchanges>

*Virtuele uitwisseling: internationalisering vanuit je huiskamer* (15 November 2021) <https://www.hva.nl/content/nieuws/nieuwsberichten/2021/11/week-van-de-internationale-student.html>

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**2020**

*iKUDU one year on - Transforming curricula through internalisation and virtual exchanges* (14 December 2020). <https://www.businessghana.com/site/news/general/228867/iKUDU-one-year-on-Transforming-curricula-through-internalisation-and-virtual-exchanges>

*Office for International Affairs: Enabling internationalisation at the UFS* (13 August 2020) <https://www.ufs.ac.za/templates/news-archive/campus-news/2020/august/office-for-international-affairs-enabling-internationalisation-at-the-ufs>

*iKudu Project launches Blog* (23 April 2020) <https://www.ufs.ac.za/templates/news-archive/campus-news/2020/april/ikudu-project-launches-blog>

**2019**

*Blending online learning and internationalisation* (10 December 2019) <https://www.ufs.ac.za/templates/news-archive/campus-news/2019/december/blending-online-learning-and-internationalisation>

*iKudu Erasmus+ CBHE project: Transforming curricula through internationalisation and virtual exchanges* (2019). <https://ieasa.studysa.org/ikudu-erasmus-cbhe-project/>

**n.d.**

*COIL - Call for new initiatives.* <https://www.uantwerpen.be/en/projects/ikudu/activities/>

*Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) Basic Overview* <https://cms.cut.ac.za/Files/Froala/fa62a646-9610-440a-9e3e-bf81f58120dd.pdf>

*DUT International Special Projects.* <https://www.dut.ac.za/internationalisation-projects/>

*iKUDU. Transforming curricula through internationalisation and virtual exchanges* <https://www.uantwerpen.be/en/projects/ikudu/>

*iKUDU. Transforming curricula through internationalisation and virtual exchanges* <https://www.unisi.it/internazionale/dimensione-internazionale/programmi-europei-di-formazione-e-mobilit%C3%A0/progettazione-14>

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*iKUDU: Developing the concept of Internationalisation of the Curriculum through COIL virtual Exchange projects between South African and European Higher Education Institutes (n.d.)*  
<https://www.thuas.com/research/centre-expertise/ikudu-developing-concept-internationalisation-curriculum-through-coil>

*Transforming Curricula Through Internationalisation and Virtual Exchange (iKUDU)*  
<https://www.coventry.ac.uk/research/research-directories/current-projects/2019/transforming-curricula-through-internationalisation-and-virtual-exchange-ikudu/>

# CHAPTER 7: COIL EXCHANGES: REFLECTIONS ON CASE STUDIES FOR COIL IN PRACTICE

## Commitment 7

55 sustained COIL exchanges will be established.

## Commitment 14

A total of 2 625 students from Europe and 2 625 students from SA will engage in COIL virtual exchanges.

1. 60 COIL exchanges were established.
2. A total of 1 526 students from Europe and 1 628 students from South Africa engaged in COIL virtual exchanges.

## Abstract

At the outset of the project, two commitments were made in terms of COIL numbers. The first was that 55 sustained COIL exchanges would be established, and the second was that a total of 2 625 students from Europe and 2 625 students from SA would engage in COIL virtual exchanges. While the number of COILs was exceeded, the student numbers were not attained. A total of 60 projects, engaging 1 671 SA students and 1 714 EU students, totalling 3 385 students, were attained. Although this falls short of the initial target of 5 250 students, it is attributed to smaller-than-expected average COIL project sizes. However, the sizes reached are normal for COIL. Through this chapter, we have outlined ways in which limitations have been overcome through innovative techniques and approaches.

**Key words:** COIL, virtual exchange

## 7.1 Introduction:

This chapter will highlight reflections on case studies for COIL practice. First of all, an overview will be provided of the number of COIL projects that have been achieved, highlighting the numerical data. After this, several examples discussing specific issues and lessons learned will be shared. Finally, breakthroughs achieved by iKudu will be

explained. These breakthroughs will focus on specific issues arising from working in North-South COIL projects.

## 7.2 The Numerical Data

The iKudu project is dedicated to fostering a contextualised and purposeful approach to the internationalisation of curricula through Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL). Since its inception, the project's primary objective has been to engage 5 250 students across 55 COIL projects, ensuring equal representation in both Europe and South Africa. The below table illustrates this.

**Table 3: Detail of COIL projects between 2020 and 2024**

Year	No. of Projects	Repeat Projects	Students Involved (SA)	Students Involved (EU)	Total Students	Average Size
2020	5	0	130	127	257	51,4
2021	15	1	450	374	824	54,9
2022	16	6	450	518	968	60,5
2023	18	7	442	505	947	53,6
2024	6	0	199	190	389	64,8
Total	60	14	1 671	1 714	3 385	56,4

The numerical progression signifies not only the growth in projects but also the establishment of a sustained practice, evident in the increase in repeat projects and the growing average size of student involvement. A total of 60 projects, engaging 1 671 SA students and 1 714 EU students, totalling 3 385 students, were attained. Although this falls short of the initial target of 5 250 students, it is attributed to smaller-than-expected average project sizes. However, the sizes reached are normal for COIL. This is because COIL is a student-centred approach to collaboration, requiring an equal number of students between two universities. The average class size in Europe is smaller, creating somewhat smaller projects. Over time, however, one can see that this

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average has increased from 54 to 67, meaning that projects increased in size, for example by expanding from one to two classes of students on each side.

### 7.3 Beyond the numbers: Case studies discussing specific issues and lessons learned

Moving beyond projects to practice, the narrative unfolds in challenges faced, such as the pandemic and academic mobility, with continuing efforts to integrate COIL projects into the curriculum. Additionally, institutions involved have witnessed a rise in the overall number of COILs at their institutions.

Reflection on the 60 COIL practices completed reveals significant variation in size, programmes, levels, and topics. To encapsulate this diversity, five projects are spotlighted, which explain some of the unique challenges and lessons learned. This illustrates the following topics:

1. **Interdisciplinarity:** How to navigate mindset changes required for academics in inter-, multi-, or transdisciplinary projects?
2. **Collaboration size:** Strategies for upscaling COIL projects beyond the initial stages, involving more lecturers and students.
3. **Local context use:** Leveraging local cultural context for educational advantage.
4. **Fostering discussion around sensitive topics:** How can COIL help students to discuss sensitive topics in unequal societies.
5. **Technology and inclusivity:** Exploring low-data solutions and technology use for inclusivity in the digital divide.

#### 7.3.1 Case Study 1: Interdisciplinarity

The University of the Free State (UFS) and the University of Siena (UoS) developed a COIL project that brought together students from Child Law in Education (UFS) and Discrimination and Gender Violence (UoS). The topic of the collaboration was: Comparative perspective and children's rights and abuse, thus allowing students with different qualifications and knowledge to work together. Students were divided into mixed groups and were asked to choose a topic related to child abuse and describe

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different approaches adopted in the two countries. The presentation had to contain the SA and Italian perspectives.

Before the COIL project started, the students were divided into teams and spent some time getting acquainted. During the first and second synchronous sessions, the academics from the respective universities gave a lecture on their disciplines to help students navigate the diverse perspectives and to introduce them to the relevant vocabulary for further research.

### 7.3.1.1 Lessons learned

- Interdisciplinarity is a key factor: Child abuse is a global issue that suited the module outcomes of both partners. In particular, the topic could be explored from a multidisciplinary perspective.
- The fact that the academics have similar research interests is also very relevant; they could share their expertise and integrate their viewpoints.
- Each academic was free to choose how to grade the experience for their students in their own context.

### 7.3.2 Case Study 2: How to Upscale a COIL Project?

The collaboration between the Central University of Technology (CUT) and The Hague University of Applied Sciences (THUAS) on the Urban Environment topic exemplified successful upscaling. Originating from a class-based project, it now involves all students within an academic year at both institutions, reaching 100 students at CUT and 130 students at THUAS annually.

Activities included a personal vlog related to the theme. A group alliance document discussed not just the deadlines and regulations, but also the expectations, desires, and needs of each member. An original video highlighted the assigned neighbourhoods in Bloemfontein and the Hague, resulting in a shared infographic presented in a live online meeting and a shared interview design, with interviews held in each neighbourhood resulting in a collaborative newspaper article.

Organising a project of this size was challenging. The following were critical to success:

- Smart design: by assigning neighbourhoods to differentiate student groups, and by providing clear guidelines for collaborative and individual work.
- Group alliance: it is key that students discuss the collaboration in their teams before the content.
- Shared coaching and regular coach meetings: a team only gets one coach, either from CUT or THUAS, and lecturers discuss the performance of the teams together weekly.
- Technology: by having one whiteboard for all and one for each team, there is a clear distinction between what is teamwork (such as: group alliance, questions) and what is for everyone: (such as: results).

### 7.3.2.1 Lessons learned

Another lesson is that upscaling COIL does not mean creating larger groups or more work for the academic, but rather requires more academics to be involved, and making sure the project can be integrated into the main curriculum where it is usually supported better. One of the lessons is – in order for students to become interdependent, lecturers should also be more collaborative. This means that shared coaching and relying on each other's judgment is possible, but this can only be achieved through trust.

### 7.3.3 Case Study 3: Using the local context

The COIL project developed by the University of Venda and Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences, called 'Inclusive cities and communities', brought together Urban Planning students from Venda and Business students (course: Intercultural Communication (ICC)) from Amsterdam. The project was connected to Sustainable Development Goal number 11 (UNESCO: <https://en.unesco.org/sustainabledevelopmentgoals>): sustainable cities and communities. The academics, inspired by the concept of sustainability, wanted to connect the lived experience and the sense of belonging to cities and communities.

The students' task was to describe, compare, and analyse communities in rural Venda and urban Amsterdam, exploring what makes communities inclusive. The urban planners approached these questions from a design point of view and the ICC students from a lived experience perspective with a cultural theoretical backdrop. Due to the

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difference in scale, students in Amsterdam selected neighbourhoods as the communities to analyse.

In this project, the local context and particularly the diversity of the contexts played a central role. Students were encouraged to critically analyse the context familiar to them and look for similarities between the rural and the urban experience. They were also asked to identify solutions that would work in both contexts, whereby knowledge of the similarities was key.

### 7.3.3.1 Lessons Learned

The integration of the local context helped academics and students to better understand what was happening around the university. Internationalisation is not always abroad but can also be close by. It helped the students to create an understanding for their specific situation – that, although the terms sustainability and inclusivity are shared, the specifications as to how they are applied in the local context are very diverse.

### 7.3.4 Case Study 4: *Fostering discussion on sensitive topics*

The COIL project was developed by the University of Venda and Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences; the module used for the project was Cross-cultural Management (UNIVEN) and Research Methods (AUAS). The students were expected to exchange questions and explore cultural viewpoints on gender equality and were encouraged to have open discourse.

The students were tasked with compiling a document that reflects on their learning experiences (group work) and a submission outlining individual reflections on gender equality. The learning outcome for the project included the students' understanding of cultural differences, gender roles, and gender equality in order to offer effective methods to achieve gender equality in both the Europe and South Africa.

In addition, the COIL project would address the following:

- Students explored female role models in varied fields and comprehended the societal values linked with their achievements.
- Students developed practical ideas for promoting gender equality.

### 7.3.4.1 Lessons Learned

Through COIL, there was a possibility to foster discussions on relevant but vulnerable topics for students. These were the topics that students would like to discuss, and the lecturers have noticed that if this was framed correctly in the course, more understanding could be generated between societies that have very different viewpoints. The in-depth insight into cultural contexts created a better understanding, resulting in self-awareness.

### 7.3.5 Case Study 5: Exploring low-data solutions and technology use for inclusivity in the digital divide

The first iKudu COIL project developed by Durban University of Technology (DUT) and Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences (AUAS) was forced – by the pandemic – to find creative solutions to leverage the digital divide. The Health Sciences students at DUT were studying a course on Nutrition, and the AUAS Business students were enrolled in an international marketing and entrepreneurship course.

The academics responsible for the design were forced to change and adapt their design choices when the pandemic changed the education landscape. As the campuses closed and teaching was facilitated online, the digital divide became apparent and proved challenging to navigate. The AUAS students, with laptops and 4G connectivity, were inconvenienced by the abrupt changes, but were able to pivot to the online learning environment.

DUT, however – unable to access the Wi-Fi on campus and sometimes limited to using cell phones for their studies – faced much more serious challenges. The data costs in South Africa, low bandwidth, and load shedding forced the academics to reconsider the ways in which students would collaborate online.

To mitigate the inequalities in connectivity, the academics limited the technology for the collaboration to two tools: an online mind-map tool and WhatsApp. They were aware of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) restrictions and understood that asking students to exchange telephone numbers might be risky. WhatsApp was/is a communication tool that, even for video calls, requires the least amount of data.

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### 7.3.5.1 Lessons Learned

WhatsApp allowed the students to collaborate efficiently and effectively, to share messages and send files, and even to coach with the academics. The lesson is that being flexible in the use of technology is essential for COIL, especially when working with situations that can change rapidly, such as COVID and when working with people in rural communities. Understanding which tools work where takes prevalence over an ideal scenario of using only institutional IT products. Also, low-bandwidth technology is key – not always opting for video calling, but rather sending voice messages.

When the academics evaluated their project, the lessons they learned was that the restrictions in technology availability turned out to be an advantage, as it made them more creative and innovative. Their focus on the collaborative activities determined the technology choices and not the other way around, making the experience more inclusive. Less is sometimes really more.

## 7.4 Breakthroughs in iKudu COILs

The above topics and case studies not only provide insight into the specific cases, but also address the issues seen widely within the rest of the project and could be relevant for other North-South COIL collaborations. We call these breakthroughs, because they address specific issues and lessons learned through different COIL collaborations. Each breakthrough will be discussed according to the title.

The interdisciplinarity has been beneficial. Practical problems in real-life situations do not respect disciplinary boundaries. Through capacity development for COIL, interdisciplinarity and trans-disciplinarity have been encouraged to foster the integration of knowledge, methods, and insights from different disciplines while collaborating across borders, resulting in cultural perspective exchange as well.

Furthermore, through collaboration that encourages the crossing of disciplinary boundaries, a comprehensive understanding of the problem at hand can be generated. In addition, there is potential for COIL projects to transcend disciplinary boundaries through the involvement of stakeholders and diverse knowledge systems that include academic knowledge and practical or experiential skills.

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While encouraging interdisciplinarity in COIL within the iKudu consortium, the challenge was to foster an ethos shift among participating academics, with some indicating difficulty working with disciplines different to their own. Through capacity development initiatives and the dissemination of shared experiences of successful interdisciplinary COIL projects, the iKudu work group 2 was able to facilitate the development of interdisciplinary COIL projects as part of the iKudu project.

In many COIL projects, there were disparities in terms of course class size as well as how courses were structured to accommodate large numbers of students at the local university. The collaboration size for COIL often varied from class to class, accommodating between 15 and 25 students at each partner university. COIL also tended to be piloted in smaller groups before attempts were made to upscale it. When analysing the project size and the issues at hand, we could see that the average number of students has increased.

A number of solution-driven approaches were explored through the iKudu project to ensure that all students were exposed to the internationalised element of the course. The main outcome we have seen was that COIL took time to be upscaled in the curriculum, and that multiple stakeholders needed to be involved in transferring the COIL associated with one academic in order to link it to the course. iKudu was beneficial in this approach, as academics were motivated to carry on, and to improve their practices, resulting in the upscaling. Another benefit was that iKudu has engaged different stakeholders at the universities from the start. Consideration was given to the possibility of allowing more unequal student numbers, through adapting the collaborative activities. These approaches included allowing for team structures that could include more students from one university than the other.

COIL projects that contribute to the decolonial academic initiatives of all iKudu partner institutions have been encouraged as part of the iKudu project. This entails highlighting the local context for internationalised local impact.

In example 3 above, we see how contextual differences of a specific academic theme were addressed through the lens of different disciplines. The aim was for each student to understand the underpinned themes theoretically, while collaborating to

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understand the nuanced differences on the local ground and how these theories should be interpreted and applied.

Throughout the iKudu facilitation, these approaches have been encouraged to ensure equal value of perspectives, skills, and knowledge from both sides. In this way, international collaboration could be mutually beneficial for each group.

The iKudu project aimed to facilitate international collaboration through COIL between Global South and Global North institutions. While doing so, however, it was imperative for iKudu COIL facilitators and institutional COIL coordinators to encourage acknowledgement of the socio-economic divide and the cultural differences. COIL was used to discuss sensitive topics.

There was a strong realisation that inequality and diversity are topics not to be shied away from, but to address. This has created more understanding between the worlds of the academic and the student, and a realisation that their competencies may not be different, but the reality of their context is. Also, when it comes to culture, decolonising the mind has been a continuing activity. Students and academics assumed certain ways of working. The cultural differences should be discussed and debated, but this need not result in a shared belief of values. The value is in the safe space where students can discuss these topics freely and come to their own insights and understanding.

In many COIL cases where there were such contextual differences, there was an unequal balance of student participation due to issues such as infrastructure challenges, lack of equipment for online engagement, and exorbitant cost of data in some Global South countries. Low data solutions are needed for technology to improve inclusivity. In the iKudu consortium, the breakthrough in addressing these challenges came in the form of the encouragement of a project with a balance between synchronous and asynchronous engagement to ensure the possibility of equal participation among students. Where students have encountered challenges in accessing online collaboration, the asynchronous approach was encouraged to foster collaboration at a rate where students were able to access collaborative activities when and where they had access to equipment and low-cost data.

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The above approach, however, has also given rise to the need for technology that allows for inclusive participation through hybrid COIL initiatives. Through iKudu capacity development and facilitation of COIL projects, innovative collaborative tools for virtual collaboration have been encouraged. Data-friendly platforms that allow for diverse forms of communication, including video calling, instant messaging, and document sharing, were explored in the developmental stages of COIL projects. The above example shows the breakthrough in iKudu where multiple platforms were used to facilitate equal participation and collaboration among students and academic staff.

## 7.5 Conclusion

The case study approach of this chapter aimed to highlight the unique capacity-building contribution of the iKudu project through lessons learned and breakthroughs related to contextual challenges experienced in COIL. Through this chapter, we have outlined ways in which limitations have been overcome through innovative techniques and approaches. It is important to note, though, that as COIL promotes creativity and unique activities, it is not possible to have a one-size-fits-all model of achieving these outcomes. These breakthroughs are relevant for other North-South COIL projects.

# CHAPTER 8: COIL PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND DESIGN

## Commitment 8

55 academic teachers will be trained on COIL virtual exchanges

## Delivered

222 academics and professional staff attended the training

### Abstract

In this chapter we report on the professional development for Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL), referred to in the project application as COIL training. Workgroup 2 (WG2) was responsible for delivering training and undertaking the practical, 'hands-on' elements of capacity building around COIL within the consortium. One of the key deliverables as part of the project is COIL Professional Development, something which has evolved and, arguably, transcended the original scope of the iKudu project plan. This chapter should be read with Chapter 9, which describe the material developed for the capacity building, not only during the project lifetime, but as artefacts available online for others to use.

**Key words:** Capacity building for COIL; COIL training

## 8.1 Introduction

Within the iKudu project, Workgroup 2 (WG2) was tasked with the responsibility for delivering training and undertaking the practical, 'hands-on' elements of capacity building around Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) within the consortium. One of the key deliverables as part of the project is COIL Professional Development, something which has evolved and, arguably, transcended the original scope of the iKudu project plan.

iKudu was originally envisioned and designed in a pre-pandemic world, with emphasis on physical mobility. As part of a pilot phase, those with existing COIL expertise within the consortium would be travelling between institutions for site visits and to train 'COIL

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Experts' who would, in turn, implement COIL projects. The original deliverables for this approach were to see a total of 30 academics (15 from South Africa and 15 from Europe) who have a history of delivering COIL travel to partner institutions by February 2020. These academics would then be trained and paired together with a goal to deliver the first projects by October 2020.

Full-scale implementation was to follow this, with a total of 55 academics trained as COIL experts, at least 90 COIL exchanges to be delivered by these experts, and a total of 2 625 students from Europe and 2 625 students from South Africa engaging in COIL virtual exchanges across the iKudu lifespan.

In addition to these targets, members of WG2, together with the COIL experts, were expected to produce a handbook with clear indications on COIL course development, assessment approaches and delivery methods, complete with examples, for consortium members to adopt and use in their teaching and learning strategies. A toolkit and evaluation method for COIL exchanges were also to be published online, contributing to an iKudu model for COIL exchange.

This chapter explores how WG2 went about approaching these tasks and meeting the lofty targets, with particular attention paid to the unexpected necessity-to-change approach due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

## 8.2 Description of the deliverable: COIL professional development

At the time the iKudu project kicked off, in November 2019, our shared understanding of and experience with capacity building for COIL looked very different to what it is today. The pandemic, with all its consequences, forced us to pivot our planned approach for professional development and inspired us to come up with a better plan. The original strategy for teaching and learning about COIL included an in-person workshop for partnered academics. The lockdown caused abrupt changes in how we facilitated teaching in general, and the number of planned COIL projects was reduced. Two projects went ahead as scheduled, be it with many adaptations due to the changed circumstances.

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The academics who developed a COIL project in 2020 received personalised virtual coaching by the trainers. Although time intensive, this approach allowed us to develop materials for online support, which initially was made available on an internal BlackBoard platform. By providing one-on-one coaching, the trainers developed a better understanding of the needs and questions academics faced during the development stage of their online project.

The volume of COIL projects that were promised in the project moved us to consider more efficient and more structured ways to support the academics even under COVID circumstances. This resulted in the following capacity-building strategy:

- An online synchronous and asynchronous course of four sessions of two hours for partnered academics;
- All sessions were facilitated by South-North trainer tandems;
- In between sessions, the academics worked on their COIL project design together;
- The online sessions were supported by the course material on BlackBoard;
- The COIL tandems described their project ideas in a template (COIL Plan);
- The COIL tandems received feedback on their design ideas by the workshop facilitators and their peers during the workshop sessions.

One of the most influential decisions made at the conception phase of the project was that all the capacity building would be done in South-North collaboration. Academics and COIL coordinators both in Europe as well as in South Africa needed professional development and support. The approach to use trainer from both EU and SA partners consistently in tandem. This did not only resonate with the notion of collaborative project management; it also reflected the decolonial mindset of equal collaboration that was a core value in the project.

Prior to the iKudu COIL Design workshops, the academics would be assisted in identifying a potential partner, using a Padlet with COIL profiles. In these profiles, the academics described the courses in which they wanted to embed a COIL project and their expectations and hopes for the collaboration. During the matching process, the COIL coordinators at the ten consortium universities played a critical part in identifying possible matches, setting up meetings between the academics and assisting in the introductory meetings. The academics needed the most support in imagining

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interdisciplinary collaborations, which were key in achieving the ambitious number of collaborations. This approach created an opportunity for capacity development of new COIL coordinators on aspects of matching (identifying and connecting COIL partners).

During the matching process, the institutional COIL coordinators noticed a gap in the common understanding of what the COIL modality entailed: there was a lack of academic buy-in as to why they should do COIL. This provided WG2 with an opportunity to collaborate with WG1 on developing and facilitating an introductory workshop whereby COIL was contextualised within the internationalised curriculum (later coined the COIL Foundation workshop) and which strengthened the work of WG1, providing more opportunity to “train” academics on curriculum internationalisation, and resulting in exceeding the number of academics by far (see Chapter 4). The introductory three-hour workshop covered topics such as: rationales for curriculum internationalisation, decolonisation of the curriculum, intercultural learning and, of course, the COIL modality itself. Participants engaged in activities to imagine an interdisciplinary collaboration and explored how internationalised learning outcomes would add value to their courses. A better understanding of both the why, the what and the how of COIL motivated more academics to consider a COIL practice and seek a partner.

As the iKudu project advanced, WG2 noticed two interesting developments: 1) the engagement of Teaching and Learning departments and 2) academics developing into COIL trainers and champions. The Teaching and Learning departments (which go by different names, depending on the university and which are not present at all of the partner institutions) engaged specifically with the capacity building. Their expertise with curriculum development and professional development for academics allowed the iKudu project to improve the quality of the capacity building workshops, especially in areas concerning learning outcomes exploring collaborative learning and assessment. Their engagement contributes to ensuring the sustainability of the COIL practice upon completion of the Erasmus+ iKudu project. Knowledge about and experience with COIL, curriculum internationalisation and decolonisation have been shared with International Relations Offices and Teaching and Learning Centres, thereby creating the commencement of an ecosystem for COIL.

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The second development occurred organically: academics who participated in the first round of workshops and implemented a COIL in their courses were brought into the professional development sessions to provide examples and feedback for the participants. As the need for South-North trainer tandems grew, these practitioners became facilitators. The tandems always consist of one experienced trainer that coaches a new trainer. Each workshop (the COIL Design course consists of four sessions) was facilitated by a different tandem, thereby spreading the expertise of capacity building to all partner institutions. Although the project deliverables did not include train-the-trainer, this approach actually managed to build capacity in a twofold way, increasing capacity whilst having a far more inclusive, less European-dominated structure.

Professional development for COIL is not novel and the iKudu project is not the first consortium to focus on developing training materials. What set our project outcomes apart is our focus on South-North collaboration that aims to be inclusive, diverse and contextualises COIL within an internationalised and decolonised curriculum. What do COIL projects look like if all voices and perspectives are intentionally included? How do we collaborate across challenges of connectivity? What role do interdisciplinary collaborations play in creating more equitable learning opportunities? What can we learn with and from one another? The *COIL Handbook* attempts to answer these questions.

The *Handbook* consists of guidelines and examples provided and inspired by the 55 COIL projects and the academics who have been involved. In it, the process of developing COIL is explained, from matching, introducing the modality to designing and evaluating the collaborations. Materials developed for the online workshops and the accompanying online resources have been used to continue to build capacity for COIL beyond the Erasmus+ project.

### 8.3 Reflection

The intention to use a co-creative approach to the capacity building was challenged by the initial imbalance in experience with COIL. Not all partners could contribute in the same manner, as for some COIL was still a new concept. During the first one and a half years we intentionally invested in engaging more stakeholders: academics, but also

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staff, to have more balanced numbers of academics developing COIL and trainers to facilitate workshops.

An unexpected result of the enthusiastic buy-in from academics and colleagues from Teaching and Learning units was the opportunity to develop a train-the-trainer programme. Though not formalised (with specific course materials), the approach of coaching and co-facilitation allowed more diverse voices and perspectives in the professional development. The capacity development of COIL coordinators will ensure sustained support of COIL activities beyond the iKudu project.

The training was an opportunity for academics to reflect on their pedagogical approaches; how online activities, including the use of technology, can be implemented to facilitate student learning and engagement virtually.

Decolonisation of the curriculum is an extremely complex topic and it was challenging to connect the existing knowledge and experience with this topic with the COIL practice. We intentionally included decolonisation of the curriculum in the COIL Design workshops, but the workshop facilitators – experts in this field – lacked an understanding of and experience with COIL to connect both fields adequately. Participants in the workshops, especially the first two years, struggled to put into practice the information provided during the workshops. In the last two years of the project, the WG2 continued to find solutions for this challenge. In the last edition of the Design workshops, educational developers from Teaching and Learning units were better able to create a common understanding of the concept.

During the writing of the *COIL Handbook*, decolonisation of the curriculum and designing for inclusivity were front and centre in our approach. One way we tried to achieve this was by inviting all the academics who had done an iKudu COIL project to share their experiences and provide us with tips and tricks.

While we realise that this topic remains challenging and requires further investigation, we feel it has inspired WG2 to be much more aware of intentional inclusivity: intentionally and proactively inviting diverse perspectives and focusing on inclusive collaborative practices that go beyond the digital divide. COIL still provides an

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opportunity for practitioners, academics and students to engage in the debate about different ways of knowing and being.

The completed COIL projects enabled teacher and student engagement virtually and also provided alternative modes of internationalisation and addressed limitations linked to mobility schemes.

## 8.4 Conclusion

Although WG2 was unable to deliver the COIL Professional Development as originally intended in person at one of the partner institutions, the COVID-19 pandemic provided the space to be agile and adapt our approach, and to reflect and refine how iKudu trained academics across the project lifespan.

Although initially not anticipated, the pivot to a train-the-trainer approach resulted in an arguably stronger, more comprehensive approach, one that was also fairer and more inclusive. Through working with partners across the consortium, WG2 was able to reach out more organically to those who were interested in delivering COIL, allowing for a more tailored, localised and meaningful approach to take place, rather than the more formal and centralised training that was initially envisioned. This approach also reduced the reliance on physical mobility, which simply was not possible during the pandemic.

Most crucially, this pivot of approach also helped to enshrine a more decolonised, less Eurocentric approach to the training. Although COIL experts did exist in South Africa, the initial approach to training may have resulted in a counterintuitive situation of European staff flying in to train South African staff, which would not have aligned to iKudu values.

Although the change in approach had many benefits, the initial switch to virtual training and a train-the-trainer model had its limitations, partially due to the rapidly changing situation and the need to be agile in our changing approach. Upon reflection, certain elements of the training, particularly linking COIL to decolonised practices, were perhaps rushed and poorly understood by participants as a result. WG2 was able to

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reflect, adapt and evolve to ensure future iterations of the training would proactively address the issues identified.

Ultimately, WG2 has learned a great deal through this experience, particularly in relation to inclusivity and the power of harnessing diversity and inclusive practices. As we finalise the handbook and toolkits, it is hoped that we can fully articulate the spirit of *Ubuntu* and shared, inclusive practices as experienced by our working group through the development of communities of practice beyond the iKudu project.

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# CHAPTER 9: MATERIAL DEVELOPED FOR COIL TRAINING AND SUPPORT

## Commitment 9:

A handbook with clear indications on COIL course development and delivery methods, including examples for pilot COIL projects to adopt in their teaching and learning strategies will be published.

## Commitment 10:

A toolkit for COIL exchanges in South Africa will be published online.

## Delivered

1. A handbook with clear instructions on COIL course development and delivery methods, including examples for pilot COIL projects to adopt in their teaching and learning strategies were published and are available online
2. A toolkit for COIL exchanges in South Africa was published online

## Abstract

Linking with Chapter 8, this chapter provides an overview of the material developed for COIL capacity building and COIL support, namely the COIL handbook and the COIL toolkit. Both these are based on material developed through the course of the project, and in many cases it was a combination of intentionality and resilience adapting to circumstances.

**Key words:** COIL training material, professional development resources.

## 9.1 Introduction

The pursuit of knowledge within higher education knows no border and transcends geographical distances and cultural differences. It is through this pursuit of knowledge that connections that enrich students' learning experiences and educators are forged. It is within this context, spirit of collaboration and innovation that the Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) initiative emerges as a beacon of transformative and inclusive education in the iKudu project. In order for colleagues at the partner universities and beyond to be able to use COIL confidently in their classes, capacity

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needs to be built. While other chapters, including chapter 8, provide a description of the professional development that took place, this chapter briefly introduces the material developed to the reader. All these can be found on the iKudu website (<https://www.ufs.ac.za/ikudu>) under the Tools tab.

## 9.2 The COIL Handbook

The handbook represents the culmination of a remarkable journey of professional development, one that brought together the ten “iKudu universities” in a shared endeavour to redefine and transform the landscape of higher education. Through training, virtual exchanges, and cross-cultural dialogue, these institutions have embraced the principles of COIL to create a dynamic and inclusive learning environment that knows no boundaries.

The handbook that was developed serves as a roadmap for institutions seeking to embark on their own COIL journey. It offers practical insights, best practices, and lessons learned from the experiences of participating universities, providing guidance and inspiration for educators eager to embrace innovation and foster global citizenship in their classrooms.

The handbook is divided into five chapters, with a number of addenda at the back.

Chapter 1 provides an introduction to COIL in the internationalisation of the curriculum context, and includes not only an overview, but also introduces key concepts and how all these are embedded in the broader scope of internationalisation of higher education. It explains how COIL is used to support existing content, and what the benefits of COIL are for staff and students.

Chapter 2 focuses on partnering for COIL. It introduces the concept, highlights the importance of a good partnership, and discusses how to initiate the partnership as well as the role that both the international office and academics can play in such partnership. Other topics that are covered in this chapter include:

- Workshops and info sessions
- Compatible objectives with partner
- Inclusivity and COIL partnering

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Chapter 3 is an extensive chapter focusing on the design of COIL. It includes the following sections:

- Learning outcomes for COIL
- Essentials and pitfalls
- Collaborative tasks for COIL
- Deciding what is best for the task at hand
- Assessment for COIL
- Icebreakers for COIL
- Reflection for COIL
- Educational technology for COIL
- Digital tools and apps

It includes several images to complement the descriptions, making it easy to follow the text.

Chapter 4 provides an overview on how to prepare students for their COIL experience. Amongst others, it draws on Pelz's three principles of online pedagogy, the relationship between the lecturer and the students, and how to set rules and clarify roles and responsibilities. It also dedicates a section to how to reassure students while also ensuring that they embrace the discomforts towards growing.

The last chapter focuses on the facilitation of COIL. The process is explained, challenges highlighted, the importance of good collaboration between the lecturers are explained, and advice is provided by those who have walked the COIL journey before. An important part of the chapter is dedicated to coaching students' intercultural learning process.

The development of this handbook is based on material developed over time, with clear guidelines on COIL course development and delivery methods, as well as examples of adopting teaching and learning strategies to pilot COIL projects have already had an impact on the leadership and participants in the project. We have already noted a national interest in the work, and aspire that nationally it can inform policy makers in the Department of Higher Education and Training, but also other higher education institutions. Nationally and internationally it can inspire and inform practitioners and scholars on the practice with regard to COIL exchanges in curriculum

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internationalisation and transformation processes. It will also encourage further developments in terms of research and practice.

The COIL handbook forms part of the COIL toolkit discussed below.

### 9.3 The COIL toolkit

The iKudu COIL toolkit comprises a number of documents and artefacts that can be used to train others. These include:

- an infographic to provide an introductory overview on COIL
- a video with student voices on COIL
- a video for staff to gain an overview
- the COIL handbook
- several posters that can be used for future capacity development
- examples of completed COILs
- examples of certificates that were used
- examples of project plans



Figure 16: An example of a poster used for professional development

## 9.4 Conclusion

As we navigate the complexities of the 21st century, the need for global competence is more pressing. The challenges we face – from climate change to economic inequality –

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are inherently interconnected, transcending national borders and demanding collective action. In this context, COIL offers a powerful framework for equipping educators and students with the skills, knowledge and perspectives needed to thrive in an interconnected world.

The lessons learned through the COIL initiative are profound and far-reaching. They underscore the transformative potential of cross-cultural collaboration, highlighting the value of diversity, inclusion, and mutual respect in the educational process. By leveraging technology to connect students across continents, COIL transcends traditional boundaries, opening doors to new opportunities for learning, growth and discovery.

We hope that the COIL handbook will be used by many to advance their teaching practices and to connect students.

# CHAPTER 10: EVALUATING COLLABORATIVE ONLINE INTERNATIONAL LEARNING PROJECTS: A COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS FROM AN ERASMUS+ INITIATIVE

## Commitment 13:

Model for COIL exchange evaluation will be developed and implemented at programme and individual level.

## Commitment 14

90 COIL exchanges will be evaluated.

## Delivered

1. A range of evaluation tools have been developed and made available in the form of an Evaluation Toolkit.
2. 140 evaluations on COIL were executed.

## Abstract

As part of the quality assurance of the project, the commitment was made to develop a model for COIL exchange evaluation and then implement it at programme and individual level. In this chapter, we report on the evaluation approach, including the evaluation toolkit that was developed, as well as detail on how the evaluations were done. When developing the tools to evaluate COIL, we realised that because of the diversity of institutions and cultures, it would be difficult to suggest a one-size-fits-all. The two working groups came together to provide input that resulted in a set of diverse tools available in the online toolkit. A significant reflection from our evaluation experience is the realisation that the development and implementation of evaluation strategies should have commenced earlier in the project life cycle. The COVID-19 pandemic influenced the timing of these evaluations, introducing a 'wait and see' approach that led to some early COIL activities not being evaluated or evaluated long after completion. We believe that the approach developed by the COIL evaluation task force was appropriate for the project, facilitating the collection of crucial data and insights that will inform future refinements to our evaluation practices.

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**Key words:** COIL evaluation, COIL practice evaluation

## 10.1 Introduction

Within the iKudu project, we set forth to integrate and evaluate 55 COIL projects, aiming to foster a decolonised and Africanised approach to internationalisation at home. This endeavour was not only about achieving numerical targets but also about deepening our understanding of effective educational collaboration across diverse cultural and institutional contexts.

From the outset, the iKudu project was ambitious in scope and objectives. It sought to facilitate partnerships that span the South-North divide, promoting academic freedom and creativity through interdisciplinary collaborations. These collaborations were designed to last between four and eight weeks, providing a platform for both seasoned and novice educators to engage in COIL activities.

A significant component of the iKudu project was the comprehensive evaluation mechanism designed to assess the impact and effectiveness of the COIL initiatives. Initially, the project targeted 90 evaluations, a figure that evolved as the project progressed, reflecting the dynamic nature of educational assessments. This adaptive approach resulted in a diverse array of evaluation methods:

- **One-on-one interviews:** Conducted with educators involved in 44 COIL projects, these interviews provided in-depth insights into the educators' experiences and the pedagogical outcomes.
- **Student surveys:** Utilised for 9 of the initial projects, these surveys garnered responses from 166 student participants, offering a direct perspective from the learners themselves.
- **Project plan assessments:** Focused on 21 projects, evaluating them against criteria such as proof of COIL execution, learning outcomes, duration, and educational activities.

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- International office reviews: With 32 project evaluations conducted by the partner universities' international offices, this method ensured that the projects adhered to institutional standards and expectations.
  - Student reflections: Employed in 34 COIL projects, these reflections served as a qualitative measure of student engagement and learning.

Collectively, these 140 evaluations not only surpassed the initial target of 90, but also underscored the project's commitment to a reflective and iterative learning process. Each method brought a unique lens to the evaluation, tailored to meet the evolving needs of the project and its participants.

The chapter delves into the specifics of these varied evaluation approaches. While the detailed findings of these evaluations are beyond the scope of the chapter, they are pivotal in shaping the continuing discussions about the efficacy and impact of COIL projects. Moreover, the evaluation data is available upon request for those interested in a deeper exploration of the project's outcomes.

In essence, the iKudu project not only achieved its quantitative targets, but also enriched the academic landscape by fostering a nuanced understanding of international collaboration. The evaluations, with their comprehensive and adaptable approach, played a crucial role in this achievement, ensuring that the project's impacts were both measured and meaningful. The reflections and outcomes of this endeavour will undoubtedly influence future initiatives aimed at enhancing global educational cooperation.

## 10.2 The Evaluation Approach

In 2021, the iKudu project established an evaluation task force with a clear mandate to develop methodologies for assessing both existing and prospective COIL projects. This initiative faced challenges from the outset, as existing evaluation templates used by consortium partners proved unsuitable for the nuanced requirements of the iKudu project. For instance, Coventry University employed a basic evaluation form that was predominantly focused on quantitative metrics such as student participation numbers. This approach, while structured, fell short in capturing the qualitative aspects of COIL

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activities, such as the successes and key learning outcomes that are crucial to understanding the deeper impacts of these international collaborations.

To effectively address these challenges, the evaluation was strategically segmented into two distinct components, each designed to fulfil a unique purpose within the project's framework:

1. **The Evaluation Toolkit:** This component was aimed at providing educators with the tools to conduct evaluations upon the completion of their COIL projects. The primary goal here was to encourage reflection and facilitate continuous learning from one's own experiences.
2. **COIL Project Evaluations:** This aspect of the evaluation framework also involved assessment of individual COIL projects, but unlike the evaluation toolkit, these evaluations were conducted by members of iKudu not directly involved in the specific COIL project. The objective was to ensure an unbiased evaluation of the COIL projects, providing a broader perspective on the outcomes and impact of the activities.

### 10.2.1 The Evaluation Toolkit

The development of an evaluation toolkit represented a core component of the iKudu project's strategy to empower educators to effectively assess their own COIL projects. Collaboratively designed by the project team and an art-based research expert from the University of the Free State, the toolkit was crafted with a clear focus on adaptability. This approach facilitated a departure from traditional, often Eurocentric, evaluation models and embraced a broader, more inclusive range of evaluative practices that recognised and respected cultural diversity.

The primary goal of the evaluation toolkit was to equip educators with a diverse set of tools to critically analyse their COIL projects. This was aimed at helping them understand the intrinsic value of their efforts, identify what was successful and what was less effective, and glean insights that could inform improvements in future iterations of their projects. By fostering a culture of continuous learning and self-

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improvement, the toolkit sought to enhance the overall quality and impact of COIL engagements.

The toolkit was made readily accessible within the project team's environment, ensuring that all educators within the iKudu consortium could easily utilise its resources. The toolkit included:

**Introduction to the Toolkit and Decision-Making:** This component provided users with a guide on how to navigate the toolkit and make informed choices about which tools to employ based on their specific project needs and contexts.

**Art-Based Evaluation:** This innovative approach encouraged educators to use artistic methods to express and evaluate the learning outcomes and experiences associated with their COIL projects, offering a creative alternative to traditional assessment methods.

**Evaluation Data Bank:** Included a compilation of topics and sample questions that educators could adapt for their evaluations, providing a structured yet flexible framework for gathering feedback.

**Reflective Journal:** Encouraged continuous personal reflection throughout the COIL project, allowing students to document experiences, insights, and developmental milestones.

**Student Presentations:** Enabled educators to assess the effectiveness of learning through students' ability to articulate their experiences and learnings in a formal presentation format.

**Student Questionnaires:** Provided structured feedback from students, offering insight into their perceptions, learning outcomes, and overall satisfaction with the COIL experience.

**Group Interviews and Focus Groups:** Facilitated discussions among groups of participants, providing qualitative data on the collaborative aspects of COIL projects and the intercultural dynamics experienced by the participants.

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Feedback from the project evaluations highlighted that the majority of COIL projects utilised at least one of the tools provided in the toolkit, with student presentations and reflective journals proving to be particularly popular. This usage underscored the toolkit's relevance and effectiveness in meeting the evaluative needs of educators within the iKudu project, offering them valuable insights into the pedagogical and interpersonal dynamics of their international collaborations.

### 10.2.2 COIL Practice Evaluations

The second component of our evaluation strategy involved comprehensive COIL projects to be evaluated. The task force devised a multifaceted approach that combined surveys and interviews, allowing for an in-depth assessment through three distinct but complementary phases. Each phase was designed to capture different aspects of the COIL projects, providing a holistic view of their implementation and impact:

*Mid-Project Surveys:* These surveys were strategically administered during the midpoint of selected COIL projects. They provided preliminary insights into the projects' functioning and impact, offering an early indication of potential areas for improvement and success.

*End-of-Project Staff Interviews:* Conducted at the conclusion of the COIL projects, these interviews were crucial for gathering detailed feedback. They captured the experiences and perspectives of staff members involved, offering a deep dive into the qualitative aspects of the project outcomes.

*Documentary Evaluation:* This phase involved the review of submitted documents, such as project plans and joint assignments. In some instances, both types of documents were reviewed, providing a concrete measure of the projects' content and structure, and ensuring that the COILs met their stated educational objectives.

These varied methods of evaluation have collectively enriched our understanding of the projects, revealing insights into the student experience, the effectiveness of the staff's pedagogical approaches, and the substantive content of the COIL courses. The remainder of our discussion will focus particularly on the end-of-project staff

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interviews, which emerged as the most informative and revealing component of our evaluation strategy.

### 10.2.3 End-of-Project staff interviews

We have determined that using interviews to evaluate our COIL project is the most effective approach. This conviction stems from recognising that COIL projects, especially those connecting universities across the Global North and Global South, transcend mere academic exchange. They are fundamentally about forging and nurturing relationships across diverse cultural landscapes.

Interviews, as a qualitative research method, offer a depth and richness of understanding that quantitative measures such as rubrics might overlook. Through engaging, one-on-one dialogues, we were able to delve into the intricacies of each participant's experience. This is crucial in comprehending not just the logistical outcomes of the COIL projects, but more importantly, the emotional and interpersonal dynamics at play. Given the relational essence of these projects, it is imperative to capture the subtle yet profound impact on individual participants. Moreover, the personal nature of interviews echoes the very spirit of COIL and iKudu – fostering understanding and connection across cultural divides. This approach is not merely a research tool; it is a reflection of the collaborative ethos that we strive to cultivate in these projects. By choosing to listen actively and empathetically, we are not only collecting data but also reinforcing the value we place on each participant's unique perspective and experience.

The flexibility inherent in the interview process is particularly advantageous in cross-cultural contexts like ours. It allows us, as researchers, to adapt and respond to the diverse narratives that emerge, ensuring that our evaluations are attuned to the distinct cultural and contextual factors inherent in each COIL project. This adaptability is essential when navigating the complexities of international educational collaborations. Furthermore, qualitative methods such as interviews capture the richness and diversity of these experiences in ways that quantitative methods cannot. They provide a platform for participants to articulate their stories, challenges, and triumphs in their own words, thus offering an invaluable lens through which the intricacies of collaborative international projects can be understood.

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However, it is important to consider that interviews can be time-consuming and potentially subject to biases. Therefore, they are often used in conjunction with other methods to provide a more comprehensive evaluation. For this reason, documentation is also submitted by the academics.

The evaluation interviews revolved around several core themes, each meticulously chosen to reflect critical aspects of the COIL projects:

1. **Faculty Collaboration:** Assessing the extent and effectiveness of collaboration between faculty members from participating institutions.
2. **Learning Outcomes:** Discussing the specific learning objectives of each COIL and evaluating their achievement.
3. **Assessment Methods:** Exploring how the COILs were assessed, both formally and informally.
4. **Employability Skills:** Identifying the employability skills developed through the COILs and their prioritisation within the projects.
5. **Student Engagement and Participation:** Examining the level of student engagement in various activities, including discussions, group work, and other collaborative efforts. This theme also explored the motivational aspects throughout the project.
6. **Intercultural Competencies:** A crucial aspect of COIL is the interaction between students from diverse cultural backgrounds. The interviews delved into the depth and quality of these interactions and how they enhanced the learning experience.
7. **Technological Integration:** Given COIL's reliance on technology for communication and collaboration, the effectiveness, ease of use, and reliability of the technological tools used were critically evaluated.
8. **Sustainability and Scalability:** Evaluating the potential for each COIL project to be sustained over time and scaled to involve more participants or adapt to different contexts.

9. Feedback from Participants: Gathering participant feedback on their specific COIL experience and the project as a whole, highlighting successes and areas for improvement.

The analysis phase blended qualitative insights with quantitative data, initially considering the development of an evaluation rubric based on interview feedback. The possibility of developing an evaluation rubric based on interview data was considered, which could categorise themes on a Likert scale or assess them against expectations.

A potential rubric could include themes such as Learning Outcomes, Student Engagement and Participation, Cross-Cultural Interaction, Technological Integration, Faculty Collaboration, Feedback from Participants, Project Outcomes, and Sustainability and Scalability. The challenge would then be to establish the expected level of performance for each criterion. However, the inherent flexibility of COIL projects and the diverse nature of their implementation led to the decision against a standardised rubric. Instead, the emphasis remained on tailored qualitative assessments to capture the nuanced experiences of COIL participants.

### 10.3 Conclusion

Evaluating COIL projects presents significant challenges due to the inherently versatile nature of COIL itself. As a flexible tool or method rather than a strictly defined activity, COIL projects vary widely. They may be discipline-specific or interdisciplinary, focus on intercultural competences or prioritise knowledge exchange, and occur synchronously or asynchronously. This versatility complicates the creation of a 'one-size-fits-all' evaluation approach. Further complexity arises from the subjective nature of participants' experiences. Newcomers to COIL might struggle with its unconventional aspects, while others may deeply value the opportunity for intercultural exchange and collaboration with distant peers. Some participants may focus on acquiring subject-specific knowledge, whereas others might see COIL as a chance to enhance language skills with native speakers, depending on the backgrounds of their COIL partners.

A significant reflection of our iKudu COIL evaluation experience is the realisation that the development and implementation of evaluation strategies should have commenced earlier in the project life cycle. The COVID-19 pandemic influenced the

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timing of these evaluations, introducing a 'wait and see' approach that led to some early COIL activities not being evaluated or evaluated long after completion. Despite these challenges, the task force successfully devised a tailored interview approach for COIL evaluation, eschewing a standard rubric. While this method proved to be time-consuming and placed considerable demands on project resources towards the end of the project, it allowed us to capture valuable insights into participants' experiences and perspectives.

We believe that the approach developed by the COIL evaluation task force was appropriate for the project, facilitating the collection of crucial data and insights that will inform future refinements to our evaluation practices. As we consider developing a rubric for future COIL activities beyond the iKudu project, evaluating COIL projects remains a priority area for further attention and research. As the iKudu consortium transitions to a sustainable network, it is essential to continue these discussions to develop better and more streamlined methods of evaluation. This continuing conversation will ensure that our evaluation practices evolve to meet the needs of a dynamic educational landscape.

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# CHAPTER 11: LEARNING FROM STUDENT EXPERIENCES IN COIL

## Commitment 14

90 COIL exchanges were evaluated.

### Delivered

In addition to the evaluations, we also specifically engaged with student experiences to learn how they experienced COIL.

### Abstract

Through the iKudu consortium, many COIL projects have been initiated. It is of essence to understand how the coming together of students from geographically distant places is experienced by students as the core stakeholders. In this chapter, specific examples of COIL projects are discussed. Main themes that emerged were the role of technology and language, factors that inspire or hinder, and what students are learning, but also the anxieties and trepidations of students. Several lessons that could be learnt from the case studies are emphasised in the conclusion. In the drive to foster cultural awareness and encourage the development of key employability skills, COIL is one of the internationalisation-at-home instruments that can prepare students to thrive in the global environment. However, it can only deliver on this promise when the COIL practice is aligned with and embedded in the curriculum.

**Key words:** COIL, student experience,

## 11.1 Introduction

Given the increasing presence of COIL in higher education across the world, it is important to draw lessons for further enhancement and professionalisation of the practice. Through the iKudu consortium, many COIL projects have been initiated, and with iKudu nearing its end, it is time to reflect on how students have experienced the collaborative projects, bringing together students from geographically distant places. The examples of the COIL projects discussed in this paper highlight collaboration between the iKudu consortium members of the Central University of Technology, Free

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State (CUT), the Durban University of Technology (DUT) – both in South Africa, and The Hague University of Applied Sciences (THUAS) in the Netherlands. The golden thread across the collaboration between universities was the student experiences; therefore, the objective of this chapter is to showcase the students' learning experiences through the COIL as described by Anundsen, Waage, Boven, and Anttila (2023).

## 11.2 Methodology

The guiding principles of Appreciative Inquiry have been central in terms of providing a guiding framework for the evaluation processes during the project. Focused on identifying opportunities, recognising strengths, and focusing on 'what works' rather than dwelling on the negative, this approach propels a momentum for change through collaborative action (Cooperrider and Whitney, 2005; Elliott et al., 2020; Clouder & King, 2015). With its origins in organisational development – where it spearheads transformative strategic change – iKudu has adopted Appreciative Inquiry as an inspirational framework to support project partners, and it is acknowledged here in presenting the lessons learnt from the COIL exchanges discussed.

The students who participated in the COIL exchanges across the institutions were each invited to write a reflective report. Guided questions were provided to enable the students to reflect on their expectations of participating in the COIL exchange, including any wider insights and lessons learnt from collaborating with their respective peers. The data for this report originates from these student reflections, which were analysed after applying the following themes a priori to the data:

- The role of technology
- The role of language
- Factors that inspire and hinder motivation
- What are they learning?
- Trepidations

Prior to the discussion of the themes, a short description of each of the COIL exchanges is offered to provide context, including the focus of the COIL, the group composition, the activities students were encouraged to engage with, and the assignment task.

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## 11.3 Description of the COIL projects

### 11.3.1 Project 1: The Urban Environment

The collaborative assignments of the Urban Environment project consisted of writing a cooperation contract, writing an article, and a vlog about a certain neighbourhood in The Hague (THUAS) and Bloemfontein (CUT). The students shared their observations and reflections about these neighbourhoods, made presentations about the similarities and differences using an infographic, and wrote an article about a topic of interest that emerged from this comparison.

*Focus:* The focus of the project was on neighbourhoods in South Africa and the Netherlands. The students were expected to share their observations and reflections about these neighbourhoods.

*Study fields:* Built Environment (the courses were Urban Development Economics and Facility Management).

*Assignments:* The activities (introductory videos, group meeting, neighbourhood observations, interviews with members of the community, infographics and reflections) were designed in a manner that supported the intended learning outcomes of the project. At the end of the project, students presented their findings and were assessed by their coaches.

*Group composition:* The project had 21 groups, with each group composed of students from CUT (3) and THUAS (4). The groups were assigned a coach who worked with the groups throughout the project.

*Data:* 82 student reflections from THUAS and 70 from CUT.

### 11.3.2 Project 2: Rumours on Social Media

Journalism and Media students from THUAS participated with CUT students from the Design and Studio Art programme in the project on writing a journalistic article about the role of gossip in organisations. Both groups were able to collaborate on digital communication and communication design. The students interviewed a person working

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in an organisation in South Africa. They explored the hidden cultural rules of gossip across cultures (looking at factors such as gender, location, hierarchy, etc.).

*Focus:* This particular project comprised one assignment, which dealt with rumours on social media and comparing gossip in the countries involved.

*Study fields:* The study fields involved were International Communication Management, Communication Design and Ideation, and Collaborative Practice in the Industry.

*Assignments:* Students were firstly introduced to weekly icebreaker activities, for which they had to record a mini vlog, share an image of the area they were situated in, and post a song that held sentimental value. Guest lectures on ‘Design Thinking’ and ‘Gossip and Rumours’ were conducted by lecturers from both universities. The Design Thinking lecture highlighted the idea generation process that the designer considers when starting to design: i.e. empathise, define, ideate, prototyping, and testing. Gossip and Rumours focused on how gossip/rumours affect people’s livelihoods.

*Group composition:* The project comprised 15 CUT students from the discipline communication design, 11 students from the discipline design technology in the Department of Design and Studio Art within the Faculty of The Humanities, and 22 THUAS students from International Communication Management.

*Data:* 16 THUAS and 22 CUT student reflections.

### 11.3.3 Project 3: Health communication

This COIL project was part of an international minor in Journalism (English-taught) with the DUT medical faculty, in particular Chiropractic. The assignment was to create a communication tool/brochure for patients in South Africa about medical conditions or treatments that are often surrounded by taboos (such as manual therapy, vaccinations, or scarification). Journalism students from THUAS contributed their skills in creating videos, brochures, etc., and medical students contributed their specific areas of expertise (especially Chiropractic).

*Focus:* This COIL project focused on culturally sensitive communication on health topics and how to effectively reach culturally diverse target groups with medical information.

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The project involved interdisciplinary collaborations between students in the medical sector in South Africa and Journalism students in the Netherlands. In mixed groups, students investigated a particular health problem that would need informational intervention.

*Study fields:* The study fields involved were International Communication Management, Communication Design and Ideation, and Collaborative Practice in the Industry.

*Assignment:* The project relates to the development of educational material for patients within a particular context. The Chiropractic students have knowledge and information regarding the medical aspects of the diagnosis/problem and how it can be treated. The Communication students have knowledge and information on how to best communicate this information. Each team explored a specific ailment or health issue in relation to particular hard-to-reach target groups with diverse cultural backgrounds. Over the course of six weeks, students researched and co-created materials with accessible, accurate, and understandable health-care information. After an icebreaker activity, there were synchronous and asynchronous sessions spread over six weeks, with an online closing presentation event.

*Group composition:* The project comprised 20 DUT medical students mainly from the Chiropractic programme, and 30 THUAS students from the Journalism minor, mainly from the International Communication Management programme.

*Data:* 12 student reflections from THUAS and 17 from DUT.

#### 11.3.4 Discussion

In this section, we will present our main observations from the thematic analysis of the student reflections. Sometimes the student papers did not include any comments on some of the themes; in those cases, a more general reflection was provided. Another important note is that projects 2 and 3 were both part of international minors in The Hague. Typically, the THUAS students participating in such minor programmes are a mix of international degree-seeking students, incoming exchange students, and Dutch domestic students. Analysing their reflections would make for an interesting comparison, as it can be expected that students choosing such international

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opportunities already possess a higher level of international competence or at least have more intrinsic interest and motivation regarding international learning opportunities. Where relevant, in the sections below we will comment on observed differences and similarities between international student groups and Dutch ones at THUAS.

## 11.4 The role of technology

### 11.4.1 Reflections from CUT students

#### 11.4.1.1 Project 1

In the Urban Environment project, online education offered a collaborative platform, highlighting the significance of effective communication and flexibility, particularly in times of disturbance, such as South Africa's load shedding. Although there were intermittent connectivity problems, students successfully created a nurturing environment on WhatsApp, enabling transparent conversation and resolving difficulties. Technologies such as video conferences and messaging have been crucial in overcoming geographical barriers and facilitating regular engagement. Microsoft Office was predominantly utilised for conducting meetings and delivering presentations. Applications such as InShot for the consolidation of voice-over films, Google for supplementary research material, and Google Maps for precise position coordinates played a crucial role.

#### 11.4.1.2 Project 2

In the project Rumours and Social Media, two students highlighted that technology was important for communication with their peers in the Netherlands. The use of different applications for sharing information, learning, and collaboration was appreciated by students. Lecturers uploaded the digital brief via Blackboard and Padlet. In this project, students from CUT were introduced to Padlet – this was the first time they had engaged with this digital platform. Lecturers from both sides provided guidance by creating a short video clip for students and interacted via Teams with their guest lecture. Presentations were conducted using Microsoft PowerPoint. An assistant lecturer designed an authentic themed Padlet whereby students could get to know each other

better. Students populated information on a weekly basis during lectures. This was a bit of a challenge from the CUT side, as students were not yet comfortable using Padlet. The lecturer always had to check the progress of the students and give feedback on what was uploaded. Some found the activities quite exciting and were able to provide input accordingly. Students used WhatsApp, which was much more familiar, easier, and cost effective (in terms of data usage) as a communication platform. The load shedding was not an issue, as the labs were frequently opened for students to facilitate communication. It is evident from these collaborative projects that technology has been a key enabler for communication and engagement between student groups. Additionally, technology has enabled the sharing of information between students and academics. It also enabled careful scaffolding of learning activities to ensure meaningful learning and development of competencies such as teamwork.

#### 11.4.2 Reflections from DUT students (project 3)

In the context of the Health Communication project, DUT students appreciated their familiarity with tools such as MS Teams, Google Docs, and WhatsApp, thereby acknowledging their efficiency in the collaboration process. Notably, Google Docs and Canva were highlighted as tools conducive to fostering collaboration. The use of WhatsApp for communication further enhanced the collaborative process. Additionally, two students articulated the disruptive impact of load shedding in the project.

#### 11.4.3 Reflections from THUAS students (general)

With regard to the role of technology, in general, the THUAS students hardly mentioned technology, except as a point of discussion when commencing the project and exploring with their South African counterparts which tool would work best for both sides. In all cases, WhatsApp was used for communication between the teams. All the Dutch students had previous COIL experience, which may explain why technology was not brought up as much. Becoming aware of connectivity issues and the phenomenon of load shedding was something that THUAS students sometimes referred to in their reflections; a few even noted how this made them think of the privileges they had with unlimited access to data and stable internet connection. Within the international student groups, the issue of the online modality was raised as a potential hurdle in

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communication, especially in an asynchronous setting, requiring some more careful formulation and attention to language. This issue was not raised by the Dutch students.

## 11.5 The role of language/communication

### 11.5.1 Project 1

#### 11.5.1.1 Reflections from CUT students

Students involved in the Urban Environment project also highlighted the significance of communication and language in their joint endeavours. The collective knowledge and comprehension that emerged within the group were considered significant assets. The team valued the support mechanism in place and how – through communication – individuals with a better understanding of the tasks assisted their peers in grasping difficult concepts. The collective endeavours enhanced intercultural communication aptitude, enabling students to engage with peers from other cultural heritages despite language barriers. Notwithstanding issues such as language, technical difficulties, and differences in educational criteria, the students embraced collaboration with a receptive attitude and a desire to gain knowledge from one another. Communication platforms such as WhatsApp and Google Teams have played a crucial role in facilitating efficient collaboration, even in the presence of language hurdles and different time zones. The issues encompassed occurrences of misinterpretation, divergent communication styles, and variations in linguistic proficiencies. To overcome these issues, it was necessary to engage in active listening, actively seek clarification, and adjust communication approaches, which involved utilising visual aids.

Frequent evaluations, transparent communication, and valuable criticism played a crucial role in sustaining efficient collaboration. The students recognised the influence of their teamwork, not just on the project, but also on their personal and professional lives. Although geographic distances presented obstacles to establishing a strong relationship, the sharing of contact information and expressions of intent to continue collaborating in the future demonstrated the enduring impact of their partnership. Anticipating the future, certain students suggested methods to streamline communication and cooperation, such as offering language translation services and ensuring the widespread distribution of information through various means.

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### 11.5.1.2 Reflections from THUAS students

Contrary to what we anticipated, only two students in the Dutch programme involved in project 1 expressed anxiety about having to use English in the project; a few admitted that their level of English was not very good and used the COIL project as an opportunity to develop their confidence and proficiency. A few individuals also indicated that they found it hard to understand their South African colleagues, since they were not used to the different types of accents.

## 11.5.2 Project 2

### 11.5.2.1 Reflections from CUT students

In the Rumours on Social Media project, communication played an important role as students came from different backgrounds (including urban or rural areas) and had different language proficiencies. Students were quite enthusiastic in the first two guest lectures, as questions were asked, and numerous interactions took place. Students experienced challenges due to language proficiency as the language used (English) was not their first language. Despite this, students were able to engage and appreciated the diversity among the groups, which added different perspectives from different backgrounds. Communication between the groups was important as it enabled students to assist each other to understand the brief for the assignment. Prior engagement with a similar project gave students from CUT an opportunity to communicate their understanding about the project. Despite this, students from both institutions had challenges in terms of communicating effectively and concisely to work on the core of the project. This was shared more often in the reflections in terms of miscommunication. In the end, this had an impact on meeting project deadlines because some students did not communicate frequently. The recess periods at CUT and THUAS added to the challenge of not communicating as frequently as needed. Lecturers sent students communication via WhatsApp or email to find out why there had not been any communication.

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### 11.5.3 Project 3

#### 11.5.3.1 Reflections from DUT students

Students in the Health Communication project expressed appreciation about how multilingual the groups were on both sides. However, the DUT students engaged in English among themselves as not all languages could be accommodated. When developing the final product, the different languages in South Africa were appreciated, but students agreed that English would be used because it was difficult to accommodate all the languages. Moreover, students decided at the beginning of the project to use written communication and other ways, such as WhatsApp voice notes and videos, to get non-verbal cues as well to accommodate the differences in English language proficiency. These ways of communicating were useful for sending to clarify tasks and for sending reminders. However, at the beginning of the project, effort was made to learn to pronounce each other's names correctly.

#### 11.5.3.2 Reflections from THUAS students (general)

In the international groups for projects 2 and 3, language issues did not come up frequently, except to acknowledge the importance of adjusting their level of communication in English.

## 11.6 Factors that inspire or hinder motivation

### 11.6.1 Project 1

#### 11.6.1.1 Reflections from CUT students

For students participating in the Urban Environment project, the greatest motivation was to successfully conquer problems through teamwork and the use of a variety of applications such as InShot, Google, and Google Maps to expedite tasks and facilitate allocation of responsibilities. Collaborative learning has been found to be crucial, as it provides advantages such as enhanced student connections, a wide range of information and skill acquisition, and the cultivation of leadership and self-management abilities. The COIL experience facilitated a more uninhibited exchange of ideas among students, providing an opportunity to gain insights into distinct neighbourhoods in The Hague and Bloemfontein Central. Interacting with peers from

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another country not only enriched their academic understanding but also expanded their perspective on the world. Identifying diversity as a crucial factor, promoting transparent communication, and adopting a receptive mindset were recognised as essential components.

### 11.6.1.2 Reflections from THUAS students

In general, the Dutch students in project 1 provided more comments related to issues they struggled with or that affected their motivation regarding their collaborative assignment with South African students than in any of the other categories. In particular, they seemed to find it difficult to deal with late or no responses from their South African peers, not meeting deadlines, strained communication, and not showing up for online meetings. It was observed numerous times that the Dutch students felt that they had received more detailed information and instructions about the assignments and received more support and guidance from their lecturers. This created an unequal situation in the project from the very start, as the Dutch students felt the need to brief their South African counterparts; they were also given more time in their schedules to work on the project and received more guidance. In addition to the problematic connectivity issues, a pattern emerged whereby the Dutch students had more access to project-related information, such as instructions and resources, prompting them to take the lead in the collaboration. Not realising that the South African students were doing the project together with the rest of their classes, and not knowing about the connectivity and load-shedding issues beforehand, the students in The Hague started dividing tasks, often giving easier tasks to the South African students and becoming increasingly stressed about meeting deadlines. All this resulted in a collaboration where there was very little actual collaboration, little interaction and time or attention for relationship building. The technological side probably contributed to this, as all the teams decided to opt for WhatsApp as their main communication platform. Not only did this mean that face-to-face online interaction was quite infrequent, but it may also have created expectations on the part of the Dutch students that WhatsApp messages would be reacted to instantly, which did not happen.

When looking at the motivational aspects of project 1, we note that those groups that did manage to have more frequent synchronous online meetings were able to share more with each other on a personal level and succeeded in building rapport with each

other. Besides appreciating the opportunity to connect with students from another part of the globe and learning about their country and culture, the Dutch students especially valued timely responses, sticking to agreements, meeting deadlines, and keeping each other updated on the progress of the project. In other words, a task-based orientation seems to be something that the Dutch students feel most comfortable with. Moreover, quite a few students remarked that they were impressed with the high-quality work produced by the South African students, as well as being kind and polite.

## 11.6.2 Project 2

### 11.6.2.1 Reflections from CUT students

In the Rumours and Social Media project, students found the first two guest lectures very motivating, interacting and engaging with their lecturers, and acquiring information about the key aspects of their COIL project. Students were taken through the content of COIL and what was expected of them as a collective. At the beginning of the project, former COIL students explained how they managed to progress successfully with COIL, as well as its benefits, such as improving their confidence, interpersonal skills, intercultural skills, and being part of a global citizenship community. Students were excited to receive certificates and that their work would be added towards their portfolio. The biggest achievement they were looking forward to, was the award ceremony which was due to take place at the end of the year. COIL was embedded in the curriculum of the Design and Studio Art and the Design Technology diplomas and activities were linked to grades. This helped the students to put more effort into the execution of the project overall. The weekly critique sessions motivated the students to improve their projects as they wanted to perform well in their studies.

Numerous students' self-confidence improved through presenting, and the level of execution of their academic work improved tremendously. Students had to fill in a plagiarism declaration form to declare that they would not plagiarise any form of artwork that enhanced the credibility of their artwork. Working with productive teammates was also highlighted in the reflections, as this led to students submitting on time and not experiencing any difficulty when submitting the final project. One of the less motivating factors was the lack of communication by their teammates. Because students were divided into groups of three, they had to rely on each other to make their

project a success. Students were not able to get hold of one another in time, not because of any time difference, but more because of the lack of communication from both sides. Another factor was the workload. They felt overwhelmed and that they would not be able to complete the project. This led to anxiety and some of the students lost interest in taking part in the COIL project. Another factor could be that the topic of the project might not have been that interesting for some students and maybe impacted motivation for some.

### 11.6.3 Project 3

#### 11.6.3.1 Reflections from DUT students

In this project, DUT students appreciated the interdisciplinary nature of the assignment, where they could share their medical knowledge and the THUAS students could apply their communication background. Many students compared this particular COIL experience to a previous one, which apparently did not go so well; so, they felt positive about the group dynamics where there was eagerness to learn, good engagement from both sides, and better bonding within the teams. Also, in terms of project management, students mentioned that a fair and balanced division of work based on individuals' strengths, having a good team leader, good management of deadlines, and timely completion of tasks all contributed to the success of this collaboration. Viewing the project as an opportunity to not just grow academically, but also to allow time and space for the social dimension made for a more enjoyable and smoother collaboration. The nature of the assignment was also a stimulus, as students pointed out that the end product was relevant and served a real purpose for patients. Other motivating factors were the opportunity to connect with students from other countries, building connections, and seeing the value of different perspectives.

Although there were several motivating factors in the project, students reflected on how the manner in which they communicated with each other affected their work. Over time, it became difficult to accommodate each other's schedules; students from South Africa later realised that students from the Netherlands had part-time jobs and some struggled to balance personal and academic responsibilities. The students also indicated that students from THUAS did not actively engage in discussions. This expectation by DUT students may have been influenced by the number of COILs they

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had previously participated in, as this was not their first COIL project. These factors made it difficult for students to stick to deadlines, leading to a situation where the work of South African students was left out of the final submission. A recommendation made by one student was that the assignments could be clearly described, as this would make it easier for all students to understand what is expected and to assign tasks better according to strengths within the team.

### 11.6.3.2 Reflections from THUAS students (projects 2 and 3)

The issues that THUAS students in the international minors struggled with most were similar to the COIL experience of the Dutch programme in project 1, namely that it was difficult to deal with peers responding late or not at all, resulting in a lack of communication or a strained situation. For instance, in project 2, issues that arose were that THUAS students had difficulty in reaching CUT students, which made the progress of the COIL project quite difficult; this was the issue that most THUAS students had and vice versa. This could have been because of the different recess periods of the two universities. Other comments from both projects refer to difficulties in establishing initial contact due to connection problems, incorrect contact details, or coordinating meeting times across so many different schedules.

Like the Dutch students in the Urban Environment project, the international groups also valued the opportunity to connect with others around the world and to learn about a different country and culture. Students found project 2 to be quite interesting but felt that if themes could be added to the project it would have been great. It would have accommodated each individual's interest to making the COIL project a success. However, most students mentioned that they really enjoyed the interview, because it enabled them to learn more about rumours on social media in South Africa and assisted the students to creatively illustrate and articulate the article without any hinderance. On the other hand, students had difficulty in acquiring information from their South African counterparts, with their interviewee not being as open to answering all the questions asked to base their article on. Language proficiency might have played a role, as the interviewee might not have felt at ease answering the questions in English.

Students felt that the lecturers explained the brief accurately, but there was a bit of misinterpretation within the groups about the project. Some students felt that it would

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have been easier if they could work alone on a particular task to execute the project properly. Overall, students were able to work together despite the challenges; load shedding was not an issue as they worked independently at their own pace and had to provide constructive feedback.

## 11.7 What are they learning?

### 11.7.1 Project 1

#### 11.7.1.1 Reflections from CUT students

In the Urban Environment project, CUT students indicated that participation in the COIL projects afforded them invaluable educational opportunities. The tasks they performed exposed them to a wide range of viewpoints, which improved their creativity, communication skills, and problem-solving abilities by working together as a team. The importance of collaboration, strategic foresight, flexibility, and effective communication proved to be pivotal in achieving success, resulting in increased efficiency and diminished stress levels compared to individual effort. Investigating methods to decrease pollution in both urban areas was highlighted as an enlightening component of the educational experience. The project emphasised the significance of collaboration, teamwork, and cultural comprehension. It provided students with the opportunity to explore and understand each other's backgrounds, customs, and shared difficulties, thereby questioning pre-existing beliefs and promoting individual growth. The initiative highlighted that every community has distinct capabilities and obstacles, offering excellent prospects for learning. The team relationships and work approaches were influenced by the cultural disparities between South African and Dutch cultures. Nevertheless, the presence of various viewpoints was regarded as advantageous, enhancing intercultural competencies and a more sophisticated understanding of worldwide issues. Cooperative endeavours, such as collective assignments and dialogues, were crucial in fostering mutual knowledge, comprehension, and better appreciation of one another's contexts.

The significance of communication styles, which are shaped by cultural subtleties, was seen as crucial for achieving productive collaboration. The Dutch communication style was distinguished by its directness and casualness, whereas South African

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communication styles placed a greater emphasis on personal connections and the avoidance of confrontation. Recognition of these cultural disparities improved efficient communication, hence enhancing the quality of working relationships. COIL projects offered students a comprehensive learning experience, promoting cooperation, cross-cultural comprehension, and the acquisition of vital competencies for functioning in varied and global environments.

### 11.7.1.2 Reflections from THUAS students

In terms of learning, the Dutch students in project 1 acquired more specific knowledge of the country and society and self-reported more cultural self-awareness themselves, noting their Dutchness in terms of being direct and sometimes even pushy, the focus on efficiency and timeliness, as well as being in control. Their South African peers were mostly described using phrases such as friendly, polite, more formal and indirect in communication styles, as well as adopting more of a wait-and-see approach (which was sometimes judged as being too relaxed). In their reflections, some wrote that they could follow the example of the South African students by being less fixated on deadlines and planning. The cultural knowledge that students gained through the project remained fairly general, for instance, learning about the variety of languages spoken in South Africa, being religious, the school system, and of course the problems with electricity and connectivity.

The relevance of clear communication and the value of diverse perspectives in a COIL project were also mentioned numerous times.

## 11.7.2 Project 2

### 11.7.2.1 Reflection from CUT students

In project 2 on Rumours and Social Media, students learnt to be more creative by improving their designs and solving problems, as well as intercultural skills. Some students had never had an experience of interacting with someone from another university abroad, which enabled them to break boundaries while at home. Students also observed an improvement in their language proficiencies as they were able to interact and express themselves on issues that they were not entirely comfortable with.

Students also indicated that they were able to acquire knowledge about applications such as Padlet. The students appreciated learning about the design thinking process and how they could apply this in the context of the discipline of journalism, how to conduct an interview, and assess what information was credible to include in an article. Students learnt about the cross-cultural aspects and the different backgrounds of South Africa and the different forms of art and design. Students were able to enhance their critical thinking skills, intercultural skills, language proficiency, and communication skills. Students indicated that the COIL project was pivotal in enhancing their time management skills, as they had to plan their weekly tasks and produce what was expected of them. This was an issue because the students were only provided with three to four weeks of productivity, which led to extension of deadlines. They also learnt about their strengths and areas for development, specifically in the execution of the projects.

### 11.7.3 Project 3

#### 11.7.3.1 Reflections from DUT students

In terms of the learning experience, the DUT students involved in project 3 mentioned that they acquired knowledge pertaining to disease-related aspects within the context of both South Africa and the Netherlands. Additionally, they also indicated the advantage of combining different knowledges, arguing that it was beneficial for the outcome of the project and that this allowed them to better understand different perspectives on the same subject matter. Furthermore, the students reported becoming more aware of the influence of misinformation in shaping certain ways of perceiving things, thereby challenging their own beliefs.

The significance of effective communication and teamwork in a COIL project was also emphasised. Students conveyed that participating in the COIL project helped them enhance their collaboration and teamwork skills, although they acknowledged the challenges of collaborating with team members with different personalities when they needed to work towards a harmonious final product.

Another aspect that students highlighted in the learning experience was the acquisition of skills and attitudes such as compromise, patience, diligence, and respect.

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Additionally, they valued the opportunity to delve into each other's cultures, passions, and dreams, stressing the enriching aspect of the COIL experience.

### 11.7.3.2 Reflections from THUAS students (projects 2 and 3)

In contrast to the Dutch students, in projects 2 and 3 the international students also indicated growth in the area of project management, such as making sure that there was clear planning, task division, and regular check-ins. Moreover, the international groups also saw the relevance of engaging with different disciplines and displaying an openness towards other topics. Like their Dutch peers in project 1, the students acknowledged the relevance of clear communication and the value of diverse perspectives, but they also emphasised the importance of adjusting to different communication styles, such as giving more indirect feedback.

## 11.8 Trepidations

### 11.8.1 Project 2

#### 11.8.1.1 Reflections from CUT students

In the second project, students from CUT experienced fears and anxieties, as they did not know what to expect from the COIL project, because some students had their first encounter with someone from abroad. Students felt inferior in terms of language proficiency, which seemed to be a huge ground breaker as they were used to speaking either Dutch, English, or another native language. Students felt that they would be misunderstood or misinterpreted. Students were unsure about making vlogs of themselves as they felt a bit sceptical and rather uncomfortable about putting their personalities online. The lecturer reassured the students about the safety of the software and that Padlet had a restricted access code that would only be shared among COIL students. Students reflected on working in groups because group members had to assign a group leader. This could be quite a challenge if the group members are situated in different countries. Students felt nervous about being able to complete the project successfully, leaving some demotivated to take part in the COIL project. Students reflected that they wanted to do extremely well in this project and receive

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good results. This proved that anxiety, rather than being a limiting factor, assisted the students in continuing to work very hard to execute the project well.

## 11.8.2 Project 3

### 11.8.2.1 Reflections from DUT students

The DUT students in the project on Health Communication all had previous COIL experience, which apparently did not go so well; hence, some students mentioned that they were not keen on embarking on another COIL project. As the THUAS group comprised international students, one student felt insecure about their ability to understand all the different accents in English. Another one felt a little pressured to convey accurate information about a medical condition, almost like it was a test of knowledge as they had to assume the role of a medical expert. Other concerns expressed doubts about whether they could complete the assignment on time, difficulties in coordinating meeting times, and concerns about the workload in relation to their other coursework.

### 11.8.2.2 Reflections from THUAS students (general)

Shyness and having to work with people you do not know were mentioned by two students as barriers that needed to be overcome. In general, most students were very much looking forward to working across geographic borders at the start of the project.

## 11.9 Conclusion

The student reflections provide valuable lessons for the design and delivery of future COIL projects. Below, we have captured three main takeaways.

A thorough and intentional design of a COIL project is pivotal for its success but should also be equal from the start. The time, instruction, guidance, and support that students are provided during the project should be in equal measure from the participating institutions so that that all students start from the same position.

Another important design criterion is leveraging the diversity of perspectives as a means to enhance academic quality and innovation. The student reflections show that students value the cross-cultural interactions and recognise that the use of diverse

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perspectives and viewpoints leads to better quality and more innovative solutions. It is thus advisable to ensure that within the collaborative assignment there is a clear need to utilise diverse perspectives and that they are included in its assessment, and to consider ways to reward this cross-cultural collaboration.

Levels of student engagement vary as some may have chosen to take part whereas participation might be compulsory for others. A way to enhance student engagement may be to involve them in the design phase, for example by having students decide on the themes of the project or learning from their previous COIL experiences.

Another key lesson is striking the balance between preparing and equipping students for COIL learning and letting go. On the one hand, the student reflections above showed the need for digital, cultural, and linguistic preparation. Language proficiency in particular can be perceived as an obstacle to effective and appropriate communication, at times even jeopardising the success of the collaboration. The inclusion of a variety of communication modes and channels so that students can express themselves in writing, speaking, and with visuals can support their learning process. In addition, digital onboarding, teaching students to navigate digital tools they are not familiar with, and sharing past student experiences to bolster their confidence can reduce the level of anxiety in students so that they feel more equipped for the COIL experience and can better focus on the assignment. On the other hand, the transformative impact of COIL lies in its disruptive nature; encountering individual, cultural, and academic differences, unfamiliarity with the context of the others, and any unplanned disruptions in the work process all create a degree of discomfort. Successfully conquering such feelings is part of the learning process. Discussing the level of preparedness should be a topic of conversation between the lecturers involved in the COIL.

COIL is one of the internationalisation-at-home instruments to prepare students for thriving in the global environment, fostering cultural awareness, and encouraging the development of key employability skills, but it can only deliver on this promise when the COIL practice is aligned with and embedded in the curriculum. Cultural learning takes time, so we need to grant students the space within a COIL project to engage with and reflect on their intercultural encounters. Moreover, within the period that students are studying at our institutions, their cultural competence development will need to be

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guided and assessed regularly. This implies taking a holistic view of the curriculum, which is inclusive and accessible to all students and is scaffolded over the course of study years. Scaling up COIL projects and constructively aligning them across the curriculum is challenging and will present programme teams with new dilemmas. For instance, when COIL projects become compulsory for all students, how will we be able to engage and motivate all students when our experience may have been based on running COILs with students who have specifically opted for such an experience?

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# CHAPTER 12: SUMMATIVE EXTERNAL EVALUATION REPORT: IKUDU

## Commitment 17

Summative evaluation of the impact of the project on internationalisation will be conducted

## Delivered

1. A summative external evaluation report of the project was written
2. A summative evaluation of the impact if the project was published

## Abstract

External evaluation of the iKudu project at regular intervals was specified as a requirement by the funder and acknowledged by the recipients as a commitment. In this chapter we discuss the evaluation approach in the project in accordance to the quality action plan. This is followed by the progress and outcomes of the iKudu project, specifically focusing on the evaluation approach taken by the external evaluator. We then discuss the progress and outcomes of the iKudu project, specifically focussing on the key findings and results, the challenges and lessons learned and concluding with comments on future sustainability from the project's implementation period.

**Key words:** key findings, monitoring and evaluation, project evaluation

## 12.1 Introduction

External evaluation of the iKudu project at regular intervals was specified as a requirement by the funder and acknowledged by the recipients as a commitment. This chapter first briefly provides a background on the evaluation processes the evaluation approach of work done in accordance with the quality action plan, whereafter the progress and outcomes of the iKudu project are discussed, followed by the key findings and results, the challenges and lessons learned and concluding with comments on future sustainability from the project's implementation period, which began in November 2019 and extended to May 2024.

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## 12.2 Methodology and Evaluation Approach

The Steering Committee (SC) and external evaluator agreed that the evaluation of the iKudu project would be structured around a Results-Based Monitoring and Evaluation (RBME) framework. This framework was chosen for its systematic approach to tracking project results, performance, and impact in real time. Unlike traditional evaluation models that focus solely on summative evaluations after a project's completion, the RBME framework allowed for continuous monitoring and feedback, ensuring that any gaps in implementation could be addressed swiftly. Additionally, the RBME framework was applied to evaluate the project's information flow and cooperation mechanisms, alongside external evaluations conducted by expert advisors and evaluators.

The evaluation team, comprising both internal project leaders and external evaluators, worked closely with the SC to ensure that the evaluation was embedded into the project's management and decision-making structures. This approach allowed for adaptive management, enabling real-time course corrections and ensuring that project goals remained on track, despite external challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

A critical part of this evaluation involved the continuous assessment of the cooperation mechanisms and information flow between the ten partner universities. These processes were essential for the seamless collaboration and decision-making that drove the project's success. The RBME framework facilitated real-time tracking and adjustments in these areas through regular feedback from LPT reports and WG activities, which provided the SC with data to inform decision-making and make the necessary adjustments as challenges arose. This is discussed in section 12.2 below.

Additionally, gap analysis played a central role in the RBME approach. Internal Quality Assurance (QA) teams were tasked with performing regular gap analysis to assess project progress against key performance indicators (KPIs) and rectify any issues that arose. This allowed for continuous improvement and ensured that the project stayed aligned with its objectives. This is discussed in section 12.3 below.

Although the project initially proposed an external evaluation by a European expert, difficulties in securing a suitable candidate prevented this from being fully realised. Nonetheless, regular oversight was provided by the external evaluation team, who

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attended SC meetings and offered ongoing feedback. Their input, combined with continuous monitoring and internal evaluations, ensured that the project remained accountable and on course.

While the original proposal called for half-yearly reports by the external evaluator, the evaluator's active involvement in planning meetings and consistent feedback during each of the monthly SC meetings rendered these reports unnecessary. This was done through what was coined the living document, which was continuously updated. A comprehensive mid-term report was also submitted, ensuring that the project's progress was thoroughly documented and reviewed. The theoretical point of departure for evaluation was a Results-Based Monitoring and Evaluation (RBME) Framework that informed the Quality Action Plan (QAP)

### *12.2.1 Results-Based Monitoring and Evaluation (RBME) Framework*

Generally, the RBME framework consists of three broad phases, namely I) planning, II) monitoring and III) evaluation. The RBME framework provided a structured methodology for monitoring the iKudu project throughout its lifespan. The following steps were implemented to ensure a comprehensive evaluation process:

#### 12.2.1.1 Phase 1: Planning phase

**Readiness Assessment:** At the start of the project, the readiness of each partner institution was assessed through a condensed version of the project proposal, clearly defining the roles, outputs, and expected contributions of each member of the steering group, the working groups and the individual partner institutions. This assessment helped to gauge the level of commitment and preparedness of all stakeholders.

**Consensus on Expected Outcomes:** Consensus was reached among all partners regarding the expected outcomes of the project, ensuring a unified understanding of what success would look like. This was essential to align the efforts of all working groups and ensure a clear focus on the project's objectives.

**Key Performance Indicators (KPIs):** Initial KPIs were identified during the planning phase and directly linked to the project's objectives. These indicators provided

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measurable benchmarks that allowed for the tracking of progress and the identification of any gaps or challenges during implementation.

**Baseline Data Collection:** Baseline data were gathered from all partner universities at the beginning of the project, serving as a reference point for measuring progress over time. This included information on curriculum internationalisation efforts, policies, and teaching methods prior to the project.

**Strategic Plans:** Strategic plans were developed to guide the implementation of improvements, with a clear focus on achieving specific, tangible results. These plans, based on the approach outlined by Kusek and Rist (2004), included actionable steps aimed at enhancing project outcomes. The strategic focus ensured that all project efforts were aligned with meaningful and measurable impacts, allowing for continuous progress towards the iKudu project's objectives.

#### 12.2.1.2 Phase 2: Monitoring

The project was continuously monitored based on the agreed framework and commenced at the start of the project, and continued throughout the project involving all stakeholders. For example, using the LPT of each university report, a concise summary was provided of tasks completed, timelines, and any outstanding actions. These reports were presented at every SC meeting, enabling quick rectification of any issues. In addition to this, as the project unfolded, all results were carefully monitored by regularly collecting data from stakeholders and reporting to the stakeholders on progress in terms of the agreed-upon KPIs.

#### 12.2.1.3 Phase 3: Evaluation

**Impact and Sustainability Assessment:** A midterm and a detailed final evaluation was carried out to assess the project's impact and sustainability. These evaluations took into consideration the possibilities of expanding and extending the project beyond the scope of the partnerships and timeline mentioned in the project proposal.

**Reporting Mechanisms:** Reporting played a crucial role in tracking project progress and ensuring accountability. The strategic planning document served as the backbone for this process, enabling a comprehensive review of project activities. Reports from each university's LPT, along with contributions from working-group leaders, external

evaluators, and financial officers, were presented at every Steering Committee meeting. In addition, interim evaluation reports were prepared by the external evaluator and submitted to the funder, providing detailed updates on the project's progress and addressing any emerging concerns in a timely manner.

**Nimbleness:** Flexibility was a key component of the RBME framework, allowing the project to adapt to unexpected challenges, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. For instance, when travel and in-person training sessions were no longer feasible, the project swiftly transitioned to online platforms to ensure continuity.

**Constant Feedback and Accountability:** A continuous feedback loop was embedded into the project's culture, ensuring that quality and accountability remained at the forefront of every partner's efforts. Regular feedback from stakeholders was gathered through formal reports and informal channels, creating a culture of responsiveness and shared responsibility. This ongoing feedback mechanism allowed for quick identification of issues and immediate action, ensuring that project goals were consistently met with a high standard of quality.

The above is summarised in the diagram below.

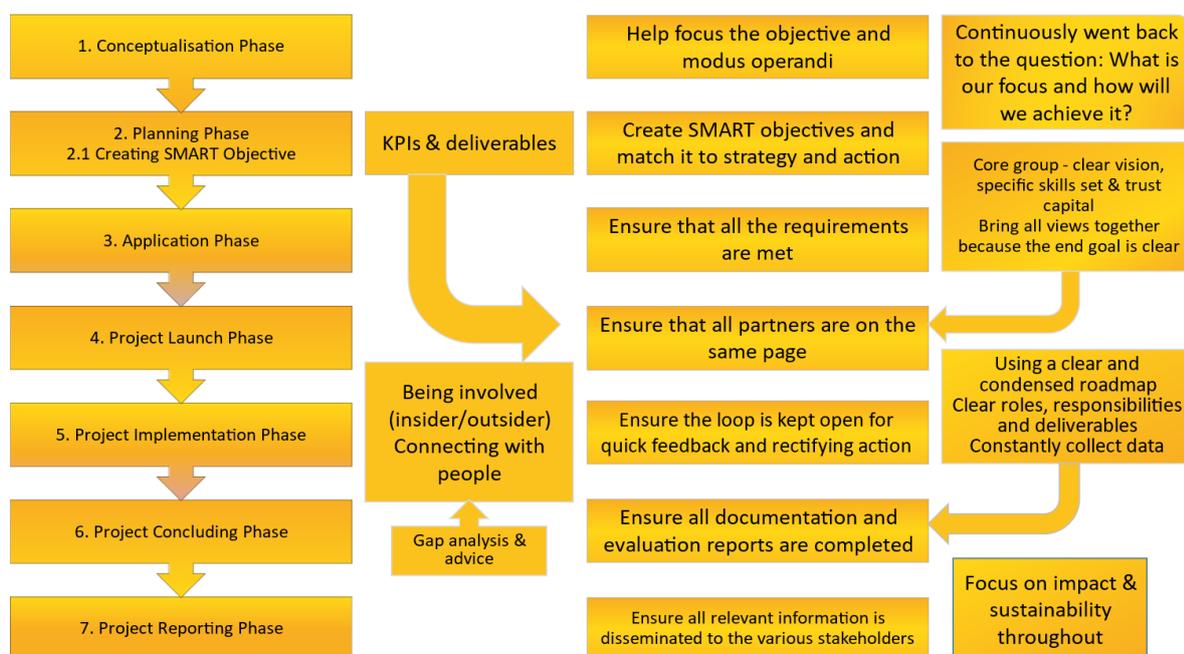


Figure 17: RBME model used for iKudu

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## 12.3 The Quality Action Plan

Informed by the RBME framework, the Quality Action Plan was collaboratively developed by the Steering Committee, the external evaluators and the advisors to ensure the project's progress was systematically monitored and aligned with its objectives. This plan was foundational to the project's success, providing a structured framework to guide all activities, support decision-making, and maintain high standards of quality throughout the iKudu project. The plan not only shaped the management of day-to-day operations, but also directly supported the evaluation strategy outlined in the following section.

### 12.3.1 Core objectives of the QAP

The following core objectives were stated as part of the QAP:

- To ensure that the project's objectives were clearly defined and understood by all stakeholders, promoting unified direction and collaboration across all partner institutions.
- To outline the specific 'why, what, how, who, when, and timeline' for each activity, creating a detailed roadmap that would drive project execution towards its key goals.
- To define the project's management structure and establish effective communication channels between all project components. This ensured that feedback loops were open, and information was shared efficiently among the SC, WG, LPTs, and external evaluators.

By continuously assessing the project progress and gaps or challenges were swiftly addressed as they emerged. This agile approach allowed the project to implement corrective measures when needed, ensuring flexibility in responding to external or internal changes.

LPT reports were central to the plan's success in capturing data, performing gap analysis, and implementing rectifying measures. At each Steering Committee meeting, decisions were made regarding tasks and deliverables, which were then tracked through these LPT reports. Each partner university was required to submit progress

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reports through a standardised questionnaire, detailing whether they had completed specific tasks or submitted necessary documents. These questionnaires were consolidated by the external evaluator into an LPT report, which was then presented at the following SC meeting to keep the project on track. If any issues arose, the SC could intervene, providing support or requesting rectifications as necessary.

This Quality Action Plan was not just a monitoring tool, but a dynamic structure that supported the overall evaluation strategy. By embedding the plan into the project's operations, the SC and external evaluators ensured that project goals remained achievable, timelines were adhered to, and that challenges were addressed promptly. As such, the plan provided the foundation for the real-time evaluation mechanisms that followed in the next section.

### *12.3.2 Evaluation of Cooperation Mechanisms among partners and information flow*

The success of the iKudu project relied heavily on the effectiveness of the cooperation mechanisms established between the ten partner universities. A strong management structure was essential in ensuring seamless collaboration, communication, and decision-making across institutions, particularly given the geographical and institutional diversity of the consortium.

In the context of evaluation, the flow of information and the clarity of management structures were closely monitored to ensure that goals were consistently met and adjustments could be made as necessary. The project's management model, as discussed above, provided a clear and organised framework for decision-making, activity coordination, and reporting.

The SC served as the central body for high-level decision-making, with regular meetings to assess progress and address challenges. Feedback from these meetings, combined with real-time data from the LPT reports, ensured that any operational issues or delays could be addressed promptly. The WGs, as operational units, were evaluated on their ability to drive specific activities and meet key performance indicators (KPIs) in curriculum internationalisation, COIL virtual exchanges, and professional development. The LPTs, acting as the project's local implementation arms, were key in coordinating

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activities at their respective institutions, while also providing critical data for monitoring and evaluation processes.

Throughout the project, mechanisms were established to maintain smooth information flow between partners. Regular reports from the LPTs and WGs allowed for a continuous feedback loop, providing real-time updates on project activities, challenges, and achievements. This facilitated informed decision-making at the SC level and allowed for adaptive management, particularly in response to external challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

Additionally, trust and collaboration among the partners were crucial in sustaining cooperative efforts. Regular presentations, publications, and public engagements by project members helped to disseminate information about the project's goals and achievements, building credibility and strengthening the partnerships. The external evaluation team, by reviewing these processes, ensured that the management and information flow structures remained robust, adaptable and effective throughout the project's lifespan.

In summary, the cooperative mechanisms and information flow were not only integral to the smooth running of the project, but were also continuously evaluated to ensure alignment with the project's goals. This real-time monitoring and adaptive response helped to ensure that the project maintained momentum and achieved its objectives in an efficient and collaborative manner.

### *12.3.3 Gap Analysis and Rectifying Measures (Internal Quality Control)*

As part of the Results-Based Monitoring and Evaluation (RBME) framework, internal Quality Assurance (QA) teams were established to ensure that key tasks were completed and any gaps identified during the project's implementation were promptly addressed. Continuous gap analysis and feedback were integral to keeping the project on track, ensuring that challenges were identified early and rectified through timely interventions. Below are three critical areas where this process was applied:

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### 12.3.4 General Management

A dedicated team consisting of the project coordinator, two administrative staff, the external evaluator, a senior researcher, and the special advisor was responsible for overseeing administrative tasks such as arranging meetings, keeping minutes, organising SC meetings, maintaining financial records, tracking submissions, and collating lists of published papers and presentations. One notable challenge was the need for a centralised, accessible platform for document storage. To address this, a repository was created on the project's MS Teams website, where key documents – including meeting minutes, attendance registers, outputs, dissemination activities, and completed activities – could be stored for easy access by all partners and stakeholders.

### 12.3.5 Financial Management

The financial QA team, comprised of the project coordinator, two administrators, and the external evaluator, maintained a master financial document that tracked resources allocated to each partner university, including travel costs, cost of stay, and staff expenses. Early in the project, it was identified that some partners had difficulty completing the required forms such as timesheets, joint declarations, and supporting documents for travel claims. The external evaluator monitored these submissions closely and followed up with partners to ensure that forms were completed accurately and submitted on time. When the project was extended due to COVID-19, the budget had to be revised, reallocating travel funds to staff costs. All financial changes were updated in the master document, with continuous monitoring to ensure timely submission and proper record-keeping across partner institutions.

### 12.3.6 COIL Quality Assurance

A significant component of the iKudu project was the comprehensive evaluation mechanism designed to assess the impact and effectiveness of the COIL initiatives. Initially, the project targeted 90 evaluations, but as the project progressed, this figure evolved, demonstrating the dynamic nature of educational assessments. The COIL quality assurance team, led by the coordinators of Working Groups 1 and 2, ensured that these evaluations were conducted using a variety of methods, each providing unique insights into the effectiveness of the COIL partnerships.

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The evaluation methods included:

- **One-on-one interviews:** In-depth interviews were conducted with educators involved in 44 COIL projects. These interviews provided valuable insights into the educators' experiences, the challenges they faced, and the pedagogical outcomes of the collaborations.
- **Student surveys:** Surveys were conducted with 577 students participating in 9 COIL projects, offering direct feedback on their learning experiences and engagement in the virtual exchanges.
- **Project plan assessments:** Focused on 22 COIL projects; these assessments evaluated various factors such as proof of COIL execution, learning outcomes, duration, and the nature of educational activities.
- **International office reviews:** A total of 32 project evaluations were conducted by the partner universities' international offices to ensure adherence to institutional standards and expectations.
- **Student reflections:** Reflections were collected from students in 33 COIL projects, offering qualitative insights into student engagement and learning outcomes.

Important to note there were some overlaps in terms of evaluations, and ultimately 53 of the 60 COIL projects were evaluated on one or more ways.

These evaluation methods were essential in identifying best practices, challenges, and areas for improvement within the COIL partnerships, allowing for continuous adaptation and enhancement of the programme. The data collected through these evaluations were analysed to ensure that the quality of the COIL collaborations was maintained at a high standard throughout the project.

By systematically collecting and analysing feedback from both educators and students, the COIL quality assurance team ensured that the iKudu project delivered meaningful, impactful virtual collaborations. This data-driven approach not only strengthened the current partnerships, but also laid the groundwork for sustainable future collaborations.

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These gap analysis processes were key in ensuring that the iKudu project maintained its momentum and addressed any shortcomings promptly. The internal QA teams ensured that administrative, financial and programmatic gaps were filled, supporting the overall evaluation strategy and keeping the project aligned with its objectives.

## 12.4 Key Findings and Results

The iKudu project has achieved significant progress in transforming higher education through curriculum internationalisation, COIL virtual exchanges, and enhanced student participation across its partner universities. These outcomes were driven by the collaborative efforts of the Working Groups (WGs), which focused on specific areas critical to achieving the project's objectives. In alignment with the project's Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and the Results-Based Monitoring and Evaluation (RBME) framework, each working group implemented targeted strategies and interventions, leading to the successful execution of the project's goals.

This section provides an overview of the key results and findings across four main areas:

- Curriculum Internationalisation and Transformation (WG1) – Focusing on the integration of international perspectives and policies at the partner universities.
- COIL Virtual Exchanges (WG2) – Facilitating sustained virtual collaborations between South African and European institutions.
- Student Participation – Evaluating the scope and impact of student involvement in COIL exchanges.
- Validation and Scalability – Assessing the long-term sustainability and potential for scaling the project outcomes.

The following sections will explore the progress made within these key areas, the challenges faced, and the long-term impact of the iKudu project.

### 12.4.1 Outcome 1: Working Group 1 – Curriculum Internationalisation and Transformation

The first key area of focus for the iKudu project was curriculum internationalisation and transformation, led by WG1. This group concentrated on embedding international perspectives into the curricula of partner institutions while simultaneously advancing curriculum transformation efforts. By doing so, the project aimed to foster an environment conducive to broader internationalisation, enabling both South African and European institutions to benefit from enhanced collaboration.

Working Group 1 achieved several significant outcomes, many of which were aligned with the KPIs established at the outset of the project. The group's efforts were marked by interactive workshops, appreciative inquiry (AI) methodology, and the creation of communities of practice within partner institutions. The table below provides a summary of the key KPIs and progress made by WG1:

Table 4: KPIs and outcomes of Working Group 1 – Curriculum Internationalisation

<b>Objectives and Key Performance Indicators</b>	<b>Tasks completed</b>	<b>Outcomes, Challenges, and Quality Control</b>
A baseline study on curriculum internationalisation and transformation in South Africa, which includes a deep analysis of the 5 partner universities, will be published.	<p>Core stakeholders were identified at each institution.</p> <p>WG1 members were trained on Appreciative Inquiry as a method.</p> <p>Data collections tools were developed.</p> <p>Baseline information was collated from each South African partner university using the Appreciative Inquiry (AI) methodology, allowing each institution to capture its status on</p>	<p>Appreciative inquiry methodology was new to most partners, requiring coaching and mentorship to complete study and the institutional reports. This objective was successfully met, and the results of the analysis were made available to all partners.</p> <p>Quality assurance: The findings and the conclusions reached were made available to all partners who had approved the process.</p> <p>Findings discussed in Chapter 1 of the Conference proceedings.</p>

Objectives and Key Performance Indicators	Tasks completed	Outcomes, Challenges, and Quality Control
	<p>curriculum internationalisation.</p> <p>Each institution published a baseline study on their own institution, based on the Appreciative Inquiry exercise on Teams.</p> <p>A joint baseline study was published online.</p>	<p>Report published on link: <a href="https://www.ufs.ac.za/ikudu/ikudu-home-page/aboutikudu">https://www.ufs.ac.za/ikudu/ikudu-home-page/aboutikudu</a></p>
<p>Policies, strategies, and guidelines relevant to curriculum internationalisation and transformation will be developed, adopted, and implemented at all partner universities.</p>	<p>A Leadership Summit was held at the University of Siena to discuss and develop guidelines further.</p> <p>A document “Considerations for enabling guidelines, strategies, and policies for internationalised curriculum renewal for universities with a focus on the diverse South African contexts” was published online.</p> <p>Towards the end of the project, each institution reported on progress made.</p>	<p>A Leadership Summit was held at the University of Siena where all universities were represented. Guidelines derived from discussions have been collated for dissemination to partner universities.</p> <p>Quality assurance: A document emanating from discussions at the Leadership summit was collated and published.</p> <p>Discussion of the findings published in Chapter 2 of the Conference proceedings.</p> <p>Document available at link: <a href="https://www.ufs.ac.za/ikudu/resources/documentation">https://www.ufs.ac.za/ikudu/resources/documentation</a></p>
<p>A community of practice on curriculum internationalisation and transformation will be established.</p>	<p>An LPT of iKudu was established at each partner university. They formed the core that has been empowered with knowledge and training regarding policy formulation and the implementation of various aspects of</p>	<p>Together with academics who have been trained and have established COIL partnerships, the LPT formed communities of practice who became the champions, propagators and trainers for curriculum internationalisation and COIL. The Working Group decided to</p>

Objectives and Key Performance Indicators	Tasks completed	Outcomes, Challenges, and Quality Control
	<p>Internationalisation of the curriculum.</p> <p>WG1 became a community of practice supporting one another in research collaboration and also in spin-off projects.</p>	<p>focus on education developers/ curriculum advisors, who were trained in COIL concepts and practice.</p> <p>Quality assurance: An MoU agreement was signed by each of the partner universities at the closing conference, committing themselves to collaborate in maintaining a community of practice and establishing an iKudu Network.</p> <p>Discussed in Chapter 3 of the Conference Proceedings.</p>
<p>50 academics will be trained on curriculum internationalisation and transformation.</p>	<p>Several iterations constituting curriculum internationalisation training took place.</p> <p>At least 239 academics and professional staff were training during one or more of the following opportunities:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Identifying core concept and discussing the different understandings and interpretations of the concepts in the core WG1.</li> <li>2. Two iterations of Webinars were held.</li> <li>3. Babylon survey was designed and completed, whereafter deliberations of the different concepts took place.</li> </ol>	<p>Online and in-person registers of training sessions attended. These records are saved on the Teams repository of the project. Records available upon request.</p> <p>Examples of material included in Chapter 4 of the Conference proceedings.</p>

Objectives and Key Performance Indicators	Tasks completed	Outcomes, Challenges, and Quality Control
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Roundtable discussions on internationalisation of higher education took place in EU/SA pairs of institutions.</li> <li>5. Presentations on curriculum internationalisation at each South African partner institution during the WG leader visits.</li> <li>6. Second iteration of the Babylon Survey.</li> <li>7. Presentation on curriculum internationalisation at the Reflective Engagement Durban.</li> <li>8. Training on curriculum internationalisation during each COIL Foundation iteration prior to the COIL training.</li> <li>9. Several presentations related to Curriculum Internationalisation during the Coventry visit.</li> </ol>	
<p>A study on progress on the interdependent processes of curriculum internationalisation and transformation at the partner universities over the first two years of the project will be published.</p>	<p>The interdependency of processes of curriculum internationalisation and transformation at the partner universities was deliberated on amongst WG1 members and the bigger group throughout the project lifetime.</p> <p>Two iterations of Babylon surveys were conducted.</p>	<p>The study was published on the Website.</p> <p>The study was peer reviewed.</p> <p>Published as Chapter 5 of the Conference proceedings.</p>

Objectives and Key Performance Indicators	Tasks completed	Outcomes, Challenges, and Quality Control
	A study on the interdependent processes was published online.	
Publications to follow from workshops and symposia.	Several publications have emerged because of this project; papers have been presented and published.	Quality assurance: Peer reviewed.  Publications can be accessed on the following link:  <a href="https://www.ufs.ac.za/ikudu/research/peer-reviewed-publications">https://www.ufs.ac.za/ikudu/research/peer-reviewed-publications</a>  Discussion of the findings available in Chapter 6 of the Conference Proceedings.

It is clear from the above table that all the deliverables related to Curriculum Internationalisation and Transformation were met.

#### 12.4.2 Outcome 2: Working Group 2 – COIL Virtual Exchanges

The second key focus of the iKudu project was the establishment of COIL virtual exchanges. WG2 was tasked with designing, implementing, and scaling COIL virtual exchanges across partner institutions. These COIL virtual exchanges provided a scalable, cost-effective alternative to traditional student mobility programmes, allowing both South African and European students to engage in meaningful cross-border learning experiences without the need for physical travel.

However, WG2 faced a serious challenge when the project came to a temporary standstill due to COVID-19 travel restrictions, as various trainings and the establishment of partnerships would have been easier to achieve in a face-to-face setting. The WG2 coordinator and her team rose to the occasion by moving all training online, adapting the COIL model to the new virtual environment. Despite the restrictions, members of WG2, with the assistance of the broader project team,

managed to encourage academics across institutions to find counterparts to co-create, co-develop, and co-teach.

The WG2 coordinator and team provided significant support, often hand-holding academics through their first experiences with COIL. Their efforts proved successful, resulting in the establishment of more COIL partnerships than originally anticipated in the project proposal. This section outlines the progress made towards achieving the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) related to COIL virtual exchanges, detailing the training provided to academics, the number of completed COIL exchanges, and the quality assurance mechanisms implemented to ensure the sustainability of these collaborations.

Table 5: KPIs and outcomes of Working Group 2 – COIL Virtual Exchanges

Objectives and Key Performance Indicators	Tasks completed	Outcomes/Divergence to plan, Quality assurance
55 sustained COIL exchanges will be established (15 during the pilot phase + 40 during the rollout phase in year 2 and year 3).	60 COIL virtual exchanges were completed.	<p>The project was able to establish more COIL collaborations than were planned. 60 COIL projects were completed.</p> <p>Quality assurance: Internal quality tools were developed and used.</p> <p>Discussed in Chapter 7 of the Conference Proceedings.</p> <p>Link: Refer to iKudu in Numbers Poster: <a href="https://www.ufs.ac.za/ikudu/resources/temp-promotion">https://www.ufs.ac.za/ikudu/resources/temp-promotion</a></p>
55 academic teachers will be trained on COIL virtual exchanges.	397 academics and support staff were trained.	<p>Quality assurance: Feedback from trained teachers at Steering Committee Meeting.</p> <p>This objective was far exceeded. In the end, 306 academics and 91 support staff were trained, totalling 397.</p>

Objectives and Key Performance Indicators	Tasks completed	Outcomes/Divergence to plan, Quality assurance
		<p>Online registers for training sessions are stored on the teams repository and available upon request.</p> <p>Discussed in Chapter 8 of the Conference Proceedings.</p> <p>Link: Refer to iKudu in Numbers Poster: <a href="https://www.ufs.ac.za/ikudu/resources/temp-promotion">https://www.ufs.ac.za/ikudu/resources/temp-promotion</a></p>
<p>Guidelines on embedding COIL exchanges in curriculum internationalisation and transformation process will be published.</p>	<p>A Subcommittee comprising WG1 and WG2 members was established to provide a draft of the guideline to the Steering Committee.</p> <p>“Considerations for enabling guidelines, strategies, and policies for internationalised curriculum renewal for universities with a focus on the diverse South African contexts” published online.</p> <p>Additional content (lecturers, video, edited training video, and examples of Icebreakers, reflection, learning outcomes and collaborative</p>	<p>Subcommittee has drafted guidelines and ratified by the SC. It forms part of the document “Considerations for enabling guidelines, strategies, and policies for internationalised curriculum renewal for universities with a focus on the diverse South African contexts” published online.</p> <p>Additional content (lecturers, video, edited training video, and examples of icebreakers, reflection, learning outcomes and collaborative activities) have been collated.</p> <p>These are discussed in Chapter 2 and Chapter 9 of the Conference Proceedings.</p> <p>Quality assurance: presented to Steering Committee for approval.</p> <p>Posted presented at conference for feedback.</p> <p>Links: <a href="https://www.ufs.ac.za/ikudu/resources/temp-promotion">https://www.ufs.ac.za/ikudu/resources/temp-promotion</a></p>

Objectives and Key Performance Indicators	Tasks completed	Outcomes/Divergence to plan, Quality assurance
	activities) have been collated.	
<p>A handbook and a tool kit with clear indications on COIL course development and delivery methods, including examples for pilot COIL projects, to adopt in their teaching and learning strategies will be published.</p>	<p>WG2 designed a training programme that consisted of 6 self-paced online modules, later split into 4 synchronous virtual training sessions.</p> <p>New professional development course: COIL Foundation.</p> <p>WG2 noticed a gap in the current workshop offering between informing academics about COIL, matching and starting COIL design, as lecturers do not fully grasp what COIL is and how COIL connects to internationalisation of the curriculum. To bridge this gap and to strengthen the connection between IoC and why we develop COIL, the COIL Foundations training was developed and became an integral part of the training programme.</p>	<p>A handbook has been developed and published.</p> <p>Quality assurance: Approved by Steering Committee.</p> <p>A brief overview of the COIL handbook and toolkit is provided in Chapter 9 of the Conference Proceedings.</p> <p>Link:  <a href="https://www.ufs.ac.za/docs/librariespro/vider66/default-document-library/ikudu-coil-handbook-2024-proofread-penultimate.pdf?Status=Master&amp;sfvrsn=8db21c20_7">https://www.ufs.ac.za/docs/librariespro/vider66/default-document-library/ikudu-coil-handbook-2024-proofread-penultimate.pdf?Status=Master&amp;sfvrsn=8db21c20_7</a></p>

Objectives and Key Performance Indicators	Tasks completed	Outcomes/Divergence to plan, Quality assurance
	<p>Over the period of the project ,training material was developed and refined, and case studies reported.</p> <p>The COIL Handbook is based on the training material developed.</p>	
<p>Community of practice on COIL virtual exchanges will be established in SA.</p>	<p>Working Group 2 has site coordinators in each of the partner universities that report to a WG2 coordinator of iKudu. The site coordinators were responsible for marketing, recruiting, training and coaching academics interested in COIL exchanges. The Working Group and the academics from each of the partner universities were established as the core of the community of practice. Most of them have been trained to become trainers.</p>	<p>A formal community of practice and a website portal for communication and networking to be established to be used after the completion of the project.</p> <p>Quality assurance: Website of the project will be maintained of the project for easy access and accessing documents, even after the completion of the project. Formal community of practice implemented at closing conference.</p> <p>They also influenced other spaces and formed communities of practices discussed in Chapter 3 of the Conference Proceedings.</p> <p>Link: <a href="https://www.ufs.ac.za/ikudu">https://www.ufs.ac.za/ikudu</a></p>
<p>Model for COIL exchange evaluation will be developed and implemented at</p>	<p>A subcommittee was formed to develop evaluation criteria, tools and a model. The first draft was</p>	<p>Quality assurance: Evaluation Tool developed and tested in evaluating completed COIL projects.</p>

Objectives and Key Performance Indicators	Tasks completed	Outcomes/Divergence to plan, Quality assurance
programme and individual level.	<p>developed and was tested and piloted in iKudu COIL exchanges.</p> <p>Additional ways of evaluation were developed based on experiences to allow flexibility and multiple ways of evaluation.</p>	<p>The approach is discussed in Chapter 10 of the Conference Proceedings.</p> <p>Link to tool:  <a href="https://www.ufs.ac.za/docs/librariespro/vider66/default-document-library/ikudu-evaluation-toolkit.pdf?Status=Master&amp;sfvrsn=5ab81c20_3">https://www.ufs.ac.za/docs/librariespro/vider66/default-document-library/ikudu-evaluation-toolkit.pdf?Status=Master&amp;sfvrsn=5ab81c20_3</a></p>
90 COIL exchanges will be evaluated.	<p>A variety of evaluation methods were used to conduct these evaluations.</p> <p>140 evaluations of COIL we completed in different formats.</p>	Quality assurance: Report included in the Evaluation report as well as the Project impact report.

### 12.4.3 Outcome 3: Student Participation

Student participation was a critical success factor for the iKudu project, as it aimed to engage equal numbers of students from South African and European partner institutions in COIL exchanges. Despite the ambitious target of involving 2,625 students from each region, several challenges were encountered throughout the implementation. Key among these were the differences in academic calendars between European and South African universities, which complicated the coordination of COIL virtual exchanges. Aligning the available windows for both partners was a complex task, requiring careful planning and flexibility from both faculties and students.

Another significant challenge was the difference in class sizes. South African universities typically have much larger student cohorts than their European counterparts, which required the careful selection of students to ensure manageable

group sizes in COIL virtual exchanges. As a result, participating academics had to employ creative methods to maintain student engagement and motivation throughout the virtual collaboration.

Despite these challenges, the project successfully established COIL exchanges between academics and students, providing a meaningful international learning experience. The following table outlines the key performance indicators related to student participation and the corresponding outcomes.

Table 6: Student participation

Objectives and Key Performance Indicators	Outputs/Outcomes	Outcomes/Divergence from plan
<p>A total of 2,625 students from Europe and 2,625 students from SA will engage in COIL virtual exchanges.</p> <p>A total of 5250 students were intended.</p>	<p>1671 SA students</p> <p>1714 EU students</p> <p>A total of 3,385 students were reached, which constitutes 64,4% of our initial target.</p>	<p>It was a challenge to reach these numbers, as it proved difficult to implement COIL in classes with large student numbers, factoring in the disruption caused by the pandemic and the misalignment of the academic calendars compounded this challenge.</p> <p>Quality assurance: Feedback received from students. Numbers tracked.</p> <p>Summary of numbers as well as case studies are provided in Chapter 7 of the Conference Proceedings.</p>

The number of students that were projected originally did not realise, while the number of COIL virtual exchanges committed to was exceeded. It was clear that COIL is a very powerful way to internationalise the curriculum with smaller classes. The average class size of South African groups participating in the COIL exchanges was 28, while the

average class size for the European groups was 29. The largest group both in South Africa and Europe was 110, while the smallest groups on each continent were 4.

#### 12.4.4 Outcome 4: Validation and Scalability

A crucial aspect of the iKudu project was ensuring that the outcomes achieved could be validated and scaled across partner institutions. This involved not only the dissemination of knowledge and best practices, but also the encouragement of senior academics to mentor and support colleagues in writing peer-reviewed articles. This collaborative effort led to many publications, which was an unplanned but highly positive outcome. These publications helped to inform scholars and the broader academic community about the project's successes and the processes behind them.

As travel restrictions were lifted, the project culminated in a closing conference held at the University of the Free State. This event brought together representatives from all partner universities and key stakeholders interested in curriculum internationalisation and COIL. The conference provided a platform for each university to present feedback on their experiences, achievements, and the learning derived from their involvement in the project. The closing conference marked a significant moment for sharing and reflecting on the impact of the project, offering insights into future scalability and sustainability.

This section will explore the key performance indicators related to the validation of project outcomes and the scalability of the approaches developed during the iKudu project.

Table 7: KPIs and outcomes in terms of validation and scalability

Objectives and Key Performance Indicators	Outputs/Outcomes	Quality Assurance
A number of publications will inform scholars on the project.	23 peer-reviewed articles have been published.  At least 21 conference presentations were delivered.	Encourage, coach and assist the iKudu Community of Practice to publish articles and increase presentation opportunities on topics related to the

	<p>At least 19 manuscripts were published in professional news outlets including websites.</p> <p>At least 17 blog pieces were written.</p>	<p>Internationalisation of the Curriculum and COIL.</p> <p>Quality assurance: peer reviewed articles.</p> <p>The detail is discussed in Chapter 6 of the Conference Proceedings.</p> <p>Links:  <a href="https://www.ufs.ac.za/ikudu/research/peer-reviewed-publications">https://www.ufs.ac.za/ikudu/research/peer-reviewed-publications</a>  <a href="https://www.ufs.ac.za/ikudu/ikudu-blogs/Transforming-Curricula-through-Internationalisation-and-Virtual-Exchanges">https://www.ufs.ac.za/ikudu/ikudu-blogs/Transforming-Curricula-through-Internationalisation-and-Virtual-Exchanges</a>  <a href="https://www.ufs.ac.za/ikudu/news/2024">https://www.ufs.ac.za/ikudu/news/2024</a>  <a href="https://www.ufs.ac.za/ikudu/news/2023">https://www.ufs.ac.za/ikudu/news/2023</a>  <a href="https://www.ufs.ac.za/ikudu/news/2022">https://www.ufs.ac.za/ikudu/news/2022</a>  <a href="https://www.ufs.ac.za/ikudu/news/2021">https://www.ufs.ac.za/ikudu/news/2021</a>  <a href="https://www.ufs.ac.za/ikudu/news/2020">https://www.ufs.ac.za/ikudu/news/2020</a></p>
Summative evaluation of the impact of the project on internationalisation will be conducted.	An impact report was published online.	Quality assurance: Presentation by each of the universities at the closing conference on the benefits each received in their in their quest to internationalise.
Closing conference for overall project evaluation will be	A conference was held and peer reviewed conference proceeding published online.	A conference subcommittee was established to take responsibility for logistics,

<p>held and peer reviewed conference proceedings will be published.</p>		<p>agenda. The conference had participation from all partners.</p> <p>Quality assurance: External evaluator was present at the conference, as well as other stakeholders; feedback from participants was that it was arranged well and was befitting to celebrate the successful conclusion of the project.</p> <p>Link:  <a href="https://www.ufs.ac.za/templates/news-archive/campus-news/2024/may/future-of-coil-discussed-at-ikudu-closing-conference">https://www.ufs.ac.za/templates/news-archive/campus-news/2024/may/future-of-coil-discussed-at-ikudu-closing-conference</a></p> <p>Conference Proceeding available on the project website</p>
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## 12.5 Challenges and lessons learned

### 12.5.1 Challenges encountered and measures taken

As with many large-scale international projects, the iKudu project faced numerous challenges during its implementation phase, requiring the team to adapt and make swift decisions. While the project was meticulously planned, unforeseen difficulties such as personnel changes, global events like the COVID-19 pandemic, and coordination across multiple institutions tested the project's resilience. Despite these challenges, the iKudu project team was able to implement effective strategies to address them, ensuring that the project remained on track. Below are the key challenges encountered and the measures taken to address them:

Table 8: Challenges encountered and measures taken to address them

Obstacle/Difficulty encountered	Measures taken to address them
Understanding financial protocols	One-on-one coaching was provided to struggling universities to ensure compliance with financial management protocols and proper documentation submission.
COVID-19 lockdowns	The COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdowns significantly disrupted the iKudu project's timelines. Launched in late 2019, the project encountered an unprecedented challenge in early 2020 when global lockdowns were enforced. Despite efforts to continue operations remotely, both WGs struggled to meet their objectives within the original timeline approved by the European Commission. Recognising the severity of these challenges, the SC successfully petitioned the European Commission for an extension, moving the project's completion date from November 2022 to May 2024. This extension allowed for the necessary adjustments to overcome the obstacles presented by the pandemic, particularly the transition from in-person activities to online formats. Plans for teambuilding, training, and other engagements had to be adapted swiftly to a virtual setting.
COVID-19 travel restrictions	The project was written up on the assumption that face-to-face meetings and training would be possible. The project quickly adapted to the reality that this would not be possible. Consequently, all interactions were taken online. The frequency of meetings was increased, unofficial online networking sessions were set up, and training was provided online.
<p>Recruiting, encouraging, collating information and communication between the partner universities and WG leaders and vice versa</p> <p>Recruiting, encouraging, and training academics to set up COIL collaborations</p>	<p>Local project Teams (LPTs) were set up at each university. At the South African universities, the Director of the International Office was nominated as the Local Coordinator and each of the working groups had one representative each. The three together formed the LPT. The WG1 local coordinator worked with their counterparts and reported to the WG1 project coordinators.</p> <p>WG2 followed the same pattern of operation. Thus, more delegated responsibility and clear work descriptions were developed for each WG. This led to the smooth running of the project.</p>

Obstacle/Difficulty encountered	Measures taken to address them
Purchase of hardware	The South African universities, facing lockdowns and not being able to communicate effectively with their Finance Departments, faced delays in purchasing the hardware. The LPTs had to convince their university management to procure them timeously.
Documenting the progress of the Project	As the evaluation of the project followed a formative approach, documenting progress and milestones reached were essential. Administrators at the coordinators office were tasked to maintain such records and make it accessible to partners. An online repository was set up.
Submission of supporting documents for financial management purposes from partner universities	Constant follow-ups and reminders were employed to ensure the timely submission of financial documentation by partner universities.

### 12.5.2 Lessons Learned

The iKudu project provided valuable insights into the implementation and management of large-scale international education initiatives, especially in an unpredictable global environment. One of the most significant lessons was the importance of embedding monitoring and evaluation (M&E) processes directly into the project's management structures. This approach ensured that decision-making could be informed by real-time data, enabling quick adjustments in response to challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic. The use of the Results-Based Monitoring and Evaluation (RBME) framework proved critical in maintaining momentum and ensuring that progress was closely tracked even in the face of such disruptions.

Collaboration and trust among project partners emerged as another key lesson. The success of the iKudu project was rooted in the strong relationships between the project management team, external evaluators, and partner institutions. Open communication and a collaborative approach to problem-solving allowed the consortium to navigate challenges effectively, demonstrating the importance of trust in maintaining cooperation across geographically dispersed institutions.

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A proactive engagement with partners was also essential in keeping the project on track. Constant reminders of project goals, coupled with ongoing tracking of progress, helped prevent delays and ensured that potential issues were anticipated before they could escalate. This forward-looking approach was particularly valuable in addressing logistical challenges, such as delays in financial reporting and the difficulties encountered in organising COIL partnerships.

Another crucial takeaway was the importance of maintaining the independence of the external evaluator. While contracted by the project, the evaluator's ability to offer unbiased, critical assessments of the project's progress added credibility to the overall evaluation process. This independent perspective ensured that quality assurance mechanisms were robust and that project objectives were being met effectively.

Finally, the adaptability of the project team in the face of unforeseen global events, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, underscored the necessity of flexibility in project planning and execution. The swift shift to online platforms for meetings, training sessions and evaluations ensured that the project could continue without major disruptions. The team's ability to embrace digital tools and remote collaboration allowed them not only to overcome the immediate challenges posed by the pandemic but also to meet or exceed many of the original targets set for the project.

These lessons will serve as valuable guidance for future projects and contribute to the long-term sustainability of curriculum internationalisation and COIL partnerships.

## 12.6 Sustainability

Sustainability was a central focus of the project from its inception, with multiple discussions held during SC meetings and other forums regarding strategies to ensure the project's long-term impact. Recognising that COIL is a cost-effective and scalable tool for promoting curriculum internationalisation, the SC emphasised the importance of continuing COIL collaborations beyond the lifespan of the project. By embedding internationalisation into everyday academic practices, the project aimed to encourage academics from both partner and non-partner universities to adopt this innovative teaching methodology.

The sustainability strategy built upon several of the key lessons learned during the project, particularly the importance of strong institutional buy-in and the establishment of communities of practice at each partner university. These communities of practice, composed of academics trained in COIL and supported by the LPTS, have taken on the role of driving COIL initiatives forward, ensuring that the partnerships and practices developed during the iKudu project are maintained and expanded. The Leadership Summit held as part of WG1 activities was instrumental in building leadership capacity within the partner universities, further contributing to the project's sustainability by fostering local ownership of curriculum internationalisation efforts.

At the concluding conference held at the University of the Free State from 6 to 9 May 2024, a significant milestone was reached with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the existing partners. This MoU expressed the partners' collective commitment to continuing their collaboration in promoting internationalisation on their campuses, with a particular focus on expanding COIL activities. One of the key outcomes of the conference was the decision to create a COIL hub in South Africa, which will serve as a central resource for both existing and new COIL partners. There was also a commitment to network with existing iKudu partners in Europe and expand the network further to other South African and European higher education institutions

Another important step in ensuring the sustainability of the project was the decision to open the consortium to new universities interested in joining the collaboration. As a first demonstration of this inclusive approach, Mittweida University of Applied Sciences from Germany was accepted as the first new partner outside the original consortium. This decision reflects the consortium's openness to expanding its reach and impact, with the goal of establishing COIL as a widely adopted practice across institutions in South Africa and beyond.

## 12.7 Conclusion

From an external evaluator's perspective, the iKudu project has achieved remarkable success, despite facing significant challenges, including the unprecedented disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. At its core, the project sought to develop a

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contextualised South African concept of internationalisation of the curriculum, using COIL as a vehicle to transform higher education practices. The project's achievements, particularly within such a limited time frame and under difficult global conditions, are commendable.

The clear definition of goals and objectives, coupled with consistent communication and an RBME framework, was crucial in keeping stakeholders focused on outputs and outcomes. The project's adaptive management approach enabled real-time course corrections, ensuring that unforeseen challenges, such as the pandemic, did not derail the project. The leadership's quick decision-making, combined with the trust built among partners, played a significant role in ensuring that the project stayed on track and ultimately succeeded.

It is important to highlight the nimbleness demonstrated by the iKudu team. The shift from planned in-person interactions to a fully online format could have jeopardised key activities, yet the team adapted swiftly, increasing the frequency of virtual meetings, setting up networking sessions, and continuing training through digital platforms. This flexibility was a key ingredient in the project's resilience and eventual success.

Throughout the project, continuous feedback mechanisms, regular gap analysis, and timely corrective actions helped to maintain momentum and alignment with the original objectives. The Steering Committee, Working Groups, LPTs, and external evaluators collaborated closely, ensuring that challenges were addressed quickly, and progress was consistently tracked.

The iKudu project not only met but, in some instances, exceeded its objectives, such as implementing more COIL collaborations than originally planned. Perhaps most importantly, it fostered a sense of camaraderie and collaboration among the partner institutions, laying the groundwork for continued cooperation. The signing of the memorandum of understanding at the concluding conference reflects the project's long-term sustainability and the strong commitment of all partners to continue working together to promote curriculum internationalisation.

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The monitoring and evaluation team has committed to work with and support the University of Free State and the consortium as it strives to entrench COIL as a vehicle for enhancing internationalisation on their campuses and encourage other tertiary institutions to adopt the practice.

In conclusion, the iKudu project has demonstrated that with clear goals, strong leadership, collaboration, and adaptability, even the most significant challenges can be overcome. The project's achievements are a testament to the dedication and resilience of all involved, and it provides a solid foundation for ongoing partnerships and future initiatives in international higher education.

## 12.8 References

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# CHAPTER 13: PROJECT MANAGEMENT

## Abstract

This chapter is not linked to one of the project deliverables *per se* but reports on the overall collaborative management of the project. It highlights key principles that contributed to the success of the iKudu project, including the focus on individual and collective strengths, the structure created to enable collaborative project management, and the agility and resilience that were core to the project. We end with specific recommendations of lessons learnt from the project.

**Key words:** project management, funding modalities,

## 13.1 Introduction

The fundamental principles, processes, and practices of project management play a crucial role in steering the entire life cycle of a project – from its initiation to the final delivery of outcomes. This chapter aims to chart the progression of the Erasmus+ CBHE iKudu project, highlighting key project management principles that contributed to its success. It is noteworthy that while the University of the Free State (UFS) oversaw overall project management, the collaborative ethos of iKudu enabled the UFS to draw on the consortium's expertise, enhancing the capacity for managing Erasmus+ projects of this nature. Knowledge and skills with regard to project management were particularly exchanged between the UFS and the University of Antwerp, the co-ordinating institution within the iKudu consortium.

## 13.2 Project management overview

The project functioned through a structured adaptive management approach, crafted to flexibly address evolving needs and challenges. This involved an adaptive management structure featuring diverse management teams at multiple levels, which adjusted and innovated as required. These teams included:

- *Steering Committee*: Comprising two members from each university (three from the coordinator/co-coordinator), this committee ratified major decisions and adjusted meeting formats to virtual platforms.
- *Working Groups*: Initially comprising three groups, then consolidated into two: WG 1, which focused on Curriculum Internationalisation and Transformation, while WG 2 oversaw COIL Virtual Exchanges, from development through implementation, and provided Professional Development to enhance capacity for local university implementation of COIL.
- *Advisory Committee*: Acted as a think tank and support group for the core project team.
- *Budget Team*: Responsible for proposing budget adjustments to the Steering Committee, essential for accommodating the transition to a virtual setup and for aligning the budget with the 18-month project extension.
- *Local Project Teams/Action Committees (LPTs)*: Established at each university to enhance accountability and synchronise efforts towards project objectives.

The central office of the UFS managed all teams effectively to ensure alignment and progress.

### 13.3 EU funding modalities

Initially, our strategy focused on comprehending the European Union's funding framework. An EU expert from Antwerp University played a pivotal role in capacity building, specifically in transferring knowledge of the EU's financial processes and reporting.

Upon selection of the iKudu project for funding, the European Commission disbursed 50% of the total project grant after signing the grant agreement and partnership agreements. Around 18 months into the project, a mid-term report was submitted to monitor expenses and assess the need for additional pre-financing. Typically, the second pre-financing instalment comprised 40% of the grant, bringing the EU's contribution to 90% at that stage. The remaining 10% would be settled upon submission of the final report, contingent upon eligible costs.

The primary budget categories for EU projects encompass staff costs, travel costs, accommodation costs, equipment costs, and subcontracting costs. These allocations were distributed across partner budgets based on their expertise and specific responsibilities related to project deliverables. Payments to partner universities were disbursed in tranches, contingent upon the submission of required documentation. These tranches covered a portion of staff costs, travel expenses, accommodation costs, equipment, and subcontracting. In the case of iKudu, South African universities were awarded 10 000 euro, included in their partner budget, to procure equipment to assist with virtual engagement.

Eligible documentation to claim for staff costs required time sheets, while travel costs necessitated an individual travel report (ITR) and copies of boarding passes and/or electronic flight tickets. Validation for accommodation costs involved an accommodation voucher or invoice. All expenditures were documented on the EU's Financial Statement template, which tracked spending across the primary budget categories.

Notably, in this funding model, the EU utilised unit costs rather than actual costs. Unit costs related to staff costs varied by staff category and differed between European and South African universities. European universities generally had slightly higher unit costs compared to their South African counterparts. Unit costs for accommodation were set at 120 euros per night, while unit costs for travel were calculated based on distances using the EU distance calculator. Claims for distances exceeding 8 000 km amounted to 1 500 euros, while distances between 500 km and 8 000 km claimed 275 euros, and distances between 100 km and 500 km claimed 180 euros. Distances below 100 km were adjusted accordingly using the distance calculator.

As the project advanced, the deepening understanding of the EU's financial protocols significantly bolstered the overall financial governance of the project.

## 13.4 Flexibility and agility

Reflecting on the iKudu project journey and the project management strategies employed, the pandemic necessitated the implementation of a remote management system and the adaptation of activities to ensure that we reach the intended outcome.

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One of the initial strategies was to reduce the length of meetings while increasing their frequency. This approach aimed to address virtual fatigue by maintaining regular, brief interactions with the consortium, thereby keeping everyone engaged and focused on the project's objectives. Furthermore, what continued to foster focus was the project's clear vision from the outset and its steadfast commitment to that vision. The critical starting point in the iKudu success story was the strong establishment of its concept and mission. From the beginning, the project maintained a clear objective: to transform curricula through internationalisation and virtual exchanges. Central to this effort was the emphasis on utilising COIL.

The second strategy emerged from an informal suggestion by the project leader at Coventry University, who proposed that we gather for a casual Friday 'cuppa'. Initially conceived as a weekly gathering over tea and coffee to reflect on the week's progress, this initiative provided a vital means for us to connect in the virtual realm and proved invaluable during the pandemic. Despite its informal nature, the Friday cuppa quickly became a regular fixture, evolving into a cornerstone of the project's culture. Many of our most profound discussions, ideas for research papers, and innovative approaches to meeting project milestones have originated from these Friday gatherings. The project manager established a recurring Zoom link for every Friday throughout the year, ensuring that the gathering was scheduled in the calendars of all consortium members.

The third strategy involved incorporating flexibility, which became crucial when the pandemic disrupted initial plans, particularly impacting travel-related activities. This necessitated a reassessment to ensure continued project advancement and development. Many activities have been successfully adapted to virtual environments, including training, communication, and evaluation, all seamlessly transitioning to online platforms. Despite challenges, the consortium established a resilient identity and enhanced collaboration. We successfully applied for an 18-month extension granted by the EU to ensure the fulfilment of all our commitments and promises. This extension enabled us to effectively deliver on our project goals.

The fourth strategy involved subcontracting three external experts to provide specialised support. Jon Rubin from COIL Consulting offered expertise in training, coaching, guidance, and support for the uptake and implementation of Collaborative

Online International Learning (COIL) pedagogy. Varkey George from Gateway Education was tasked with developing and implementing a comprehensive Implementation, Monitoring, and Evaluation (IME) plan. Merle McOmbring-Hodges provided advice on implementing COIL virtual exchange and curriculum internationalisation within the scope of the iKudu project in the South African context. Each expert had clearly defined roles and deliverables established. Continuous monitoring and evaluation were conducted collaboratively between the central office of the UFS and appointed external evaluators to identify and mitigate gaps throughout the project.

The final and arguably most crucial strategy was to acknowledge the individuals within the consortium by promoting collective leadership, validating relationships, and sharing common values. By fostering collective leadership, the project benefited from dedicated leadership during proposal development and a unified effort to integrate diverse inputs into a cohesive submission. Validating relationships allowed partners to prioritise building and strengthening interpersonal connections, thereby cultivating trust and resilience within the consortium. Establishing shared values such as trust, open communication, equality, shared decision-making, and appreciation of diversity became pivotal in maintaining unity and navigating challenges. In the context of the iKudu project, our foundation of trust served as a cornerstone for effective project management.

In conclusion, the project's ability to innovate and adapt, entirely transitioning to virtual operations amid the pandemic, underscored its resilience and capacity for remote management. Effective communication emerged as a cornerstone, supported by the spirit of ubuntu and volunteerism, which contributed significantly to its success despite adverse circumstances.

## 13.5 Recommendations

Reflecting on the journey of iKudu and considering future management of Erasmus+ projects, several key lessons and recommendations for best practices emerged:

- The disparity in unit costs between EU and South African universities underscores the need for standardisation moving forward. It is crucial to ensure fairness, as both EU and South African members contribute equally in terms of time and effort to

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drive the project forward. Equality considerations should guide the allocation of unit costs.

- *Managing Currency Fluctuations:* To mitigate exchange rate risks and financial losses, it is advisable to reduce the frequency of tranche payments to partner universities. This approach can help minimise the impact of paying out in weaker currencies, which can affect the coordinating university's eligibility for co-funding.
- *Negotiating Exchange Rates:* Negotiate with partners to align exchange rates with those stipulated by grant funders. This alignment can ensure financial stability and consistency throughout the project duration.
- *Centralising Financial Processes:* Allocate staff costs directly to universities and centralise travel bookings at the central office. This centralised approach enhances the efficiency of managing travel expenses, reducing underspending or non-utilisation of allocated travel funds that may occur when universities do not utilise their budgeted delegate numbers for project activities.
- *Appointing Finance Representatives:* Each university within the consortium should appoint a dedicated finance representative. This representative would be responsible for completing, verifying, and submitting all required reporting documentation on behalf of their institution. Capacity development initiatives should be implemented to ensure that these representatives are proficient in submitting documentation in the correct format.

These recommendations aim to streamline financial management, mitigate risks associated with currency fluctuations, and enhance accountability and efficiency within Erasmus+ projects. Implementing these best practices can contribute to the successful execution and sustainability of future projects under similar frameworks.

# CHAPTER 14: THE IKUDU SHOWCASE

## Commitment 18

Closing Conference for overall project evaluation will be held and peer-review conference proceedings will be published

## Delivered

1. The closing conference took place from 6–9 May 2024 to showcase the project work
2. A conference proceeding was published online after being peer reviewed

## Abstract

The last deliverable of the project was a closing conference and the publication of a conference proceeding. This chapter briefly describes the closing conference that took place between 6 and 9 May 2024 on the Bloemfontein Campus of the University of the Free State. It highlights in particular the thought processes that informed the structure of the conference and the approach to engage with attendees. It then provides a short explanation of the composition of the proceeding and the reviewing process.

**Keywords:** celebration, conference, drumming, project end

## 14.1 Introduction

One of the tasks that we set ourselves in the iKudu project was to end the project with a closing conference to showcase and celebrate achievements of the project and to publish a conference proceeding. When we started the planning for the conference we decided that not only should the two narrate the progress made during different phases of the project and tell the iKudu story, but we wanted to showcase the capacity that was built in the project.

## 14.2 Conference proceedings

In line with the nature of the project, namely to build capacity, we planned the details of the conference proceeding already at the Durban reflective meeting, and decided that it should be a true reflection of what occurred in the project. Thus the different

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chapters should be linked with the different project deliverables. The intention was that a person who reads the proceedings should get a clear understanding of the project, its intentions, its achievements and, importantly, the ethos and character of the project. All institutions and individuals were invited to assist with writing the proceedings, and institutions could put names forward to assist. First drafts were written at the end of 2023, and mid-January 2024 we met in The Hague for a writing retreat to refine the chapters, review one another's chapters, identify gaps that exist, and to improve on the work. A reviewer was present to read through all the chapters and provide input, while the editors did so as well.



**Figure 18: Some authors of the different chapters taking a break during the writing retreat.**

In addition to the deliverables, we added a chapter on the management of the project, as we believed that much could be learned from it.

After the final conference, all chapters were again revised and updated, sent to an external critical reader for feedback, and then proceedings were published online.

### 14.3 Closing conference

The closing conference was held on the Bloemfontein Campus of the University of the Free State from 6 to 9 May 2024. On the first evening, an opening function was held to not only serve as a reunion for those who had been part of the project over a long time, but also to welcome newcomers into the iKudu family.

#### 14.3.1 Conference day 1

The focus of day one was showcasing the deliverables of the project in a chronological order.

**Table 9: Conference programme day 1**

Tuesday 7 May 2024	Activity	Facilitator
08:45	Meet at Centenary Complex: Walk to Albert Wessels Auditorium	Atlehang Bokaba
09:00–09:30	<b>Registration</b>	Atlehang Bokaba
<b>09:30–10:45</b>	<b>Welcome to the University of the Free State</b>	Prof Vasu Reddy and Dr Glen Taylor
10:45–10:55	Walk to the Centenary Complex	Atlehang Bokaba
<b>11:00–12:30</b>	<b>Project Overview</b>	<b>Chevon Slambee</b>
11:00–11:25	1. Siqale ngaphi: Where did we begin?	Lynette Jacobs, Jos Beelen, and Thabo Dikgale
11:25–11:55	2. Becoming COILers through COILing	Eva Haug and Prof Ntsoaki Malebo
11:55–12:10	3. Nginguye, ngoba sinjalo: I am, because we are	Valeria Baloyi and Alun DeWinter
12:10–12:25	4. How to internationalise the curriculum	Alessandra Viviani and Lynette Jacobs
12:25–12:40	5. What does COIL look like?	Divinia Jithoo and Reinout Klamer
<b>12:40–13:20</b>	<b>Paper-bag lunch (provided)</b>	
<b>13:30–15:30</b>	<b>Project Overview</b>	<b>Chevon Slambee</b>
13:30–13:45	6. Ho phatlalatsa lentsoe: Spreading the word	Prof Katherine Wimpenny and Prof Gerda van Niekerk
13:45–14:00	7. Listening to students	Eveke de Louw and Tshepiso Ramalepe
14:00–14:15	8. Putting IoC and COIL together	Tiana van der Merwe and Katherine Wimpenny
14:15–14:30	9. Evaluating S-N COIL	Lize-Mari Mitchell and Marilize Pretorius
14:30–14:45	10. Ku endla leswaku phurojeke yi tirha: Making the project work	Chevon Slambee, Nooreen Adam, and Varkey George
14:45–15:00	11. Serendipitous moments	WG leaders and management
<b>15:00–15:30</b>	<b>Impressions and reflections</b>	Berto Bosscha
<b>15:45–17:15</b>	<b>Network session</b> (university representatives only)	Prof Francis Petersen (UFS VC)
<b>18:30–23:00</b>	<b>Dijo tsa mantsiboya</b> (coming together for the evening meal)	

After the welcoming and the virtual campus tour, all the delegates gathered outside the venue, where images reminding of key moments were displayed. Delegates were requested to consider the images and where they joined the iKudu family. As an act of remembrance, the initial thought-leaders of the project were celebrated as the “founding fathers”. Piet van Hove, Varkey George and Jon Rubin hooked onto one another, also carrying photos of Merle McOmbring-Hodges (deceased) and Cornelius Hagenmeier (now employed in Germany) to start the journey by walking past the images. At the image of the kick-off meeting, those present at the November 2019 meeting joined the human chain, and so it continued up to the point of entering the venue where all those who joined the project for the first time at the closing conference joined the chain to walk into the venue together.



**Figure 19: The human chain started by the “Founding fathers”, Varkey George, Jon Rubin and Piet van Hove carrying images of Cornelius Hagenmeier and Merle McOmbring-Hodges to represent the five who initiated the conceptualisation of the project.**



**Figure 20: As the project unfolded, more and more people joined the chain**

The whole day was infused with symbolism, celebrating the milestones, using particular African expressions relating to the themes, but also intentionally showcasing the capacity that was built by intentionally inviting presenters from different universities to willingly share their growth. At the end of the presentations, Berto Bosscha, Education & Science Counsellor – Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Pretoria, gave feedback on the day and reflected on the significance of what was achieved in the project.

### *14.3.2 Signing of the iKudu Network Memorandum of Understanding*

The day ended with the signing of an agreement between universities present as well as one new partner in the consortium who attended. It took the form of a 90-minute hybrid, high-level information session for senior members of iKudu partner institutions, other core partners, and key organisations with an interest in higher education.

In his opening address, the VC of the UFS, Prof Francis Petersen highlighted how the iKudu project successfully developed an internationalisation approach over the past five years that integrates virtual exchanges into internationalised, transformed curricula, thus providing a holistic internationalisation approach that potentially benefits all students, including those residing in the developing world. He explained that as iKudu was nearing its completion of the funding cycle, its member universities and core stakeholders desired to continue collaborating and to forge a network of diverse universities united by the shared commitment to inclusive internationalisation.

The programme for the event was as follows:

### Text box 5: Programme of the MoU signing

1. Welcome and purpose	Prof Petersen
2. Outcomes and impact of the iKudu Project	iKudu Project Leaders
3. Introduction of the iKudu Network	Prof Vasu Reddy, DVC, Research and Internationalisation, UFS
4. Perspective of university leadership	Prof Petersen (VC UFS), Andrew Turner (PVC CU)
5. Perspective from a new partner	Prof Volker Tolkmitt, (Rector, Mittweida University of Applied Sciences) (online)
6. Perspectives from Government representative	Berto Bosscha (Education and Science Attache of The Kingdom of The Netherlands)
7. Perspective from organisations	Lavern Samuels (President of IEASA; Member of Board of Directors of IVEC) Piet van Hove (President of the EAIE)
8. Comments from the floor	Facilitated by Prof Petersen
9. Signing of the MoU by UFS VC. Invitation to others afterwards	Facilitated by Prof Reddy

Prof Vasu Reddy, on behalf of the consortium universities provided a summary of the intent of the network as follows:

*We propose establishing a university network that will provide a forum for strategic thinking around internationalisation and become a hub for virtual exchange practices. A student-centred internationalisation process that promotes pluriform perspectives and is based on the principles of mutuality,*

*trust, academic freedom, and ubuntu will be promoted through the network. Its activities will advance virtual exchanges integrated into internationalised and transformed curricula. The principle of equal collaboration between its diverse member universities in the Global South (Africa) and Global North (Europe, including UK) will be central, as well as exploring the meaning of transformation, both for organisations and transformational learning by students and staff.*

*Within the network, communities of practice focusing on specific aspects of internationalisation, among which Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) virtual exchanges and curriculum internationalisation, will provide spaces for stakeholders from member universities to innovate. Based on the collaboration developed during the implementation of the iKudu project, the consortium members and other invited universities will consider each other as preferred partners for developing and implementing COIL virtual exchanges, curriculum internationalisation initiatives and innovations, and relevant grant applications benefiting their collaboration and internationalisation. The particular focus in the network will be on impactful South/North collaborations between Africa and Europe.*

*The members of the iKudu Consortium and the Mittweida University of Applied Science are invited to become initial members of the network. Additional members from the two regions (Africa and Europe) may be invited following a decision by the Executive Board of the iKudu Network based on consensus.*

The day was concluded by a dinner that we labelled *Dijo tsa mantsiboya*, meaning coming together for an evening meal.

### 14.3.3 Conference day 2

The focus of the second day was on the institutions themselves and to celebrate what was achieved at each institution, in a session called *Bhiyuzela*. Towards an embodied experience, the day was started with a djembe drumming session, where the acclaimed Bevil Spence and his team first taught all the delegates the techniques of drumming.



**Figure 21: QR code to a video of the drumming session**

Each of the institutions was then tasked to come up with a way to express their achievements as an institution through drumming, movement, dance and more. As an example, a short clip of the celebration by AUAS are shared.



**Figure 22: QR code to celebration by AUAS**

The day was concluded at an event hosted by CUT, again celebrating the diversity and unity within the consortium.

#### 14.3.4 Conference day 3

The last day of the conference focused on the future, and thus the iKudu network. Themes that emerged from the discussion were specific research themes to explore,

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further capacity-building needs, and more. These will be taken further as a network of universities, utilising also the seed funding pledged by the UFS for the next three years.

## 14.4 Conclusion

The iKudu conference was intended to showcase what was achieved over the more than four years. However, we also wanted to capture the spirit of the collaboration and the project and celebrate the institutions that formed part of the project. It was thus not a standard version of an academic conference, but rather an occasion to reflect, remember, celebrate and to plan ahead.

The conference was closed with an address<sup>17</sup> by Chevon Slambee, the project manager:

*Known for their remarkable jumping ability, kudus can leap up to two metres high, and even higher when in distress. This agility mirrors our growth as a project. We have made significant leaps in meeting our deliverables and achieving personal and professional milestones. I personally found my voice and confidence through this project, realising that every contribution – no matter how small – matters. We have all stretched ourselves in various ways, learning and growing together. That is why I can confidently say: we are iKudu strong! Through this project, I no longer focus on the challenges on the continent, but I appreciate that we have a valuable and essential contribution to make in the world.*

*In closing, the iKudu Project is a celebration of strength, unity, and resilience. Together, we continue to embody the spirit of the kudu, forging ahead with purpose and determination. This project is not just a chapter in our lives; it is a community we have built together. So, while we may be saying ‘au revoir’, this is far from goodbye. The journey continues, and I cannot wait to see where it leads us next – perhaps towards an even broader network!*

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<sup>17</sup> Full address is available as a blog post on the iKudu website.

# ADDENDUM 1: CONFERENCE PROGRAMME



Transforming curricula through  
internationalisation & virtual exchanges



Co-funded by the  
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of the European Union

## iKudu Closing Conference: Programme Overview

The iKudu Conference will take place between 6 and 9 May 2024. It will celebrate the achievements of the iKudu project, as well as the start of the future iKudu network.

**Programme Director: Chevon Slambee, assisted by Seithati Ramonaheng**

Monday 6 May 2024		Facilitators	Venue
18:00-21:00	Informal opening reception Opening and welcome	Piet van Hove and Lynette Jacobs	Rag farm for those that have transport or have arranged a shuttle to UFS. If you are walking to UFS, kindly meet at the Theology building at 17:45. (Dress code: informal)
Tuesday 7 May 2024		Facilitators	Venue
08:45	Meet at the Centenary Complex. Walk to the Francois Retief Building	Atlehang Bokaba	
09:00-09:30	Registration		Francois Retief Building
09:30- 10:45	Welcome to the University of the Free State (Prof Vasu Reddy, DVC: Research and Internationalisation)	Glen Taylor and Lynette Jacobs	Francois Retief Building
10:45-10:55	Walk to the Centenary Complex	Atlehang Bokaba	
11:00-12:30	Project Overview		
11:00-11:25	1. Siqale ngaphi: Where did we begin?	Lynette Jacobs, Jos Beelen, Thabo Dikgale	Terrace outside Centenary Complex



Transforming curricula through  
internationalisation & virtual exchanges



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Tuesday 7 May 2024		Facilitators	Venue
11:25-11:55	2. Becoming COILers through COILing	Eva Haug, Ntsoaki Malebo	Centenary Complex (virtual attendance possible but not interactive) Online link: <a href="https://zoom.us/j/92509717924">https://zoom.us/j/92509717924</a> Meeting ID: 925 0971 7924
11:55-12:10	3. Nginguye, ngoba sinjalo: I am, because we are	Valeria Baloyi, Alun DeWinter	
12:10-12:25	4. How to internationalise the curriculum	Alessandra Viviani, Lynette Jacobs	
12:25-12:40	5. What does COIL look like?	Divinia Jithoo, Reinout Klamer	
12:40-13:20	Paper bag lunch (provided)		Terrace outside the complex
13:30-15:30	Project Overview (continued)		Centenary Complex (virtual attendance but not interactive) Online link: <a href="https://zoom.us/j/92509717924">https://zoom.us/j/92509717924</a> Meeting ID: 925 0971 7924
13:30-13:45	6. Ho phatlalatsa lentsoe: Spreading the word	Katherine Wimpenny, Gerda van Niekerk	
13:45-14:00	7. Listening to students	Eveke De Louw, Masego Montwedi	
14:00-14:15	8. Putting IoC and COIL together	Tiana van der Merwe, Katherine Wimpenny	
14:15-14:30	9. Evaluating S-N COIL	Lize-Mari Mitchel, Marelize Pretorius	
14:30-14:45	10. Ku endla leswaku phurojeke yi tirha: Making the project work	Chevon Slambee, Nooreen Adam & Varkey George	
14:45-15:00	11. Serendipitous moments	WG leaders & management	
15:00-15:30	Impressions & reflections	Berto Bosscha Matt Witenstein	Council Chambers (virtual interactive meeting) Online link: <a href="https://zoom.us/j/92509717924">https://zoom.us/j/92509717924</a> Meeting ID: 925 0971 7924
16:00-17:30 Meet 15:45 at the Centenary Complex. Walk to the Council Chambers.	Network session (university, government and organisation representatives only)	Prof Francis Peters (UFS: VC) Prof Vasu Reddy (UFS DVC: Research and Internationalisation)	

Tuesday 7 May 2024		Facilitators	Venue
18:30-23:00	Dijo tsa mantsiboya: Coming together for the evening meal		Centenary Complex (Dress Code: As is/Traditional/Smart Casual – add an element of a culture that you are part of, or admire)
Wednesday 8 May 2024		Facilitator	Venue
09:00-09:30	Coffee & Tea		
09:30-12:00	“Bhiyozela” Facilitated interactive celebration of the 10 partner institutions	Bevil Spence	Centenary Complex
12:00-12:15	Reflection on the previous two days’ activities	Jon Rubin	
12:15 - 12:30	Group photo		Terrace outside Centenary Complex
12:30-14:00	SC meeting		iKudu Boardroom, Theology Building
12:30 onwards	Engagements		Various on and off campus as requested
16:30	Travel to CUT		Transport will be available from the Centenary Complex for attendees without own transport
17:00	CUT hosted programme		CUT campus

Thursday 9 May 2024		Facilitator	
09:00-09:30	Coffee & Tea		Centenary Complex
09:30-12:30	Future plans	Working groups	Centenary Complex (hybrid) Working group 1 online link: <a href="https://zoom.us/j/92509717924">https://zoom.us/j/92509717924</a> Meeting ID: 925 0971 7924 Working group 2 online link: <a href="https://zoom.us/j/95771904123">https://zoom.us/j/95771904123</a> Meeting ID: 957 7190 4123
12:30-13:00	Conference Wrap Up	Lynette, Jos, Eva, Lize-Mari	Centenary Complex <a href="https://zoom.us/j/92509717924">https://zoom.us/j/92509717924</a> Meeting ID: 925 0971 7924
13:00-15:00	Closing lunch (Own account)		t.b.c.



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