

Catalogue of measures for mainstreaming digital internationalisation at Leuphana

Digital Transformation Lab for Teaching and Learning (DigiTaL)

Cluster Digital Internationalisation

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Overview of the catalogue

This catalogue of goals and measures for digital internationalisation is a result of the work of the Cluster Digital Internationalisation, which collected experiences and results from three individual projects ([subprojects](#): 9 int. Master & Promotion, 10 DigiCLiL-Exchange and 11 HYLIK) in the Digital Transformation Lab for Teaching and Learning project ([DigiTaL](#)), which is funded by the Stiftung Innovation in der Hochschullehre from 2021 to 2025. The aim is to synthesise experiences from the three projects with different foci of digital internationalisation in order to anchor digital internationalisation more firmly at Leuphana. The catalogue targets three critical objectives in advancing digital internationalisation at Leuphana University:

1. It aims **to cultivate a shared understanding of digital internationalisation** among all stakeholders at Leuphana, fostering alignment and collaboration.
2. It seeks **to empower stakeholders** by elucidating the advantages and challenges inherent in [virtual exchange](#) and [blended learning](#). This will enable informed decision-making and instil a sense of confidence and capability.
3. The catalogue **enhances Leuphana's ability to integrate digital teaching and learning approaches** into its institutional strategy by translating lessons from the Digital Transformation Lab for Teaching and Learning into actionable measures for mainstreaming digital internationalisation and ensuring quality in teaching and learning.

By clarifying concepts, outlining benefits and limitations, and providing specific measures, the catalogue facilitates the effective integration of digital internationalisation into the internationalisation strategy of the institution.

Digital internationalisation as part of Leuphana's institutional efforts towards increased internationalisation

We, the team of Cluster Digital Internationalisation, conceive of internationalisation as any form of systematic and strategic integration of international dimensions in teaching, research, knowledge transfer and higher education administration and management. The objective is to adapt these fields of action to the demands and challenges of a globalised society, economy, and labour market (Wende, 2001). In this context, internationalisation in teaching and learning is understood as “the [process of a] purposeful integration of international and intercultural dimensions into the formal and informal curriculum for all students within domestic learning environments” (Beelen & Jones, 2015, p. 69). This traditional understanding has been extended by the addition that internationalisation contributes to the quality of education and makes a meaningful contribution to societal development (Wit et al., 2015).

In reference to this expanded understanding, Leuphana considers internationalisation as a central and strategic impulse for innovation in management, administration, teaching, research and public relations. Leuphana's commitment to advancing its internationalisation efforts is guided by a set of underlying guiding principles that have recently been under review. These principles include a) enhancing the University's role in education, research, and innovation, b) fostering a generation of multilingual and interculturally skilled students capable of addressing global challenges, c) creating an attractive environment for both students and staff, promoting and reinforcing cross-border collaboration and research and d) working to increase diverse perspectives in the institutional community and thereby enhance the power to innovate.

To this end, ten working objectives have been developed on a central level alongside a first

set of measures to achieve these objectives; the following list provides an overview of these objectives:

1. Improve the visibility of activities, e.g., by enhancing the visibility of existing international partnerships through active promotion and communication.
2. Improve the recording of activities, e.g., by aligning institution-wide internationalisation activities to the corresponding objectives
3. Expand strategic partnerships, e.g., by building on existing partnerships and establishing new ones
4. Increase the number of degree-seeking incomings, e.g., by intensifying targeted marketing of subject degrees to international students
5. Increase the institutional involvement in international networks, e.g., by developing fellow programmes, intensifying grant screening and increasing advisory capacities
6. Increase the number of incoming exchange mobility
7. Increase outgoing mobility of domestic students, e.g., by expanding virtual/hybrid mobility options
8. Increase the outgoing mobility among staff (academic and administrative)
9. Internationalisation@home: promote multilingualism
10. Increase the share of international staff (academic and administrative) by e.g., development towards a bilingual organisation, international employer branding

Digital internationalization integrates international, intercultural, or global dimensions into the teaching and learning at higher education institutions using information and communications technology (ICT) (Bruhn, 2020). In doing so, it contributes to three of the afore-mentioned objectives:

1. Establishing and strengthening international partnerships

The initiative aims to expand existing and initiate new partnerships for international teaching collaboration. By launching virtual exchange courses, we collaborate with current strategic partner universities and explore new collaborations based on individual courses. By inviting renowned research colleagues to provide (self-recorded) video lectures, lecturers are intensifying their collaborations within their research networks. Thus, these courses have the potential to contribute to or evolve into strategic partnerships, enhancing our institution's involvement in international networks.

2. Enhancing outgoing mobility and transversal competencies for domestic students

Digital internationalisation contributes to the development of transversal competencies among domestic students, particularly intercultural competence including multilingualism. Virtual exchange approaches, for example, are pivotal in facilitating international experiences, enabling students to incorporate an international perspective into their study programmes to better prepare them for solving of global challenges. Additionally, learning objectives in blended learning courses with an international dimension include deepening students' awareness and understanding of complex societal challenges through multi-contextual approaches (Deardorff & Jones, 2012). By exposing students to diverse perspectives which allow for a new level of reflection in the international knowledge context (Example: Research ethics and integrity courses in the tradition of US universities).

3. Increasing the attractiveness and accessibility of degree programmes for international students

By expanding the range of digitally supported international courses taught in English, the initiative contributes to making Leuphana's degree programmes more attractive and accessible to international students. This, in turn, supports the university's efforts of diversifying its student body and enhancing its global appeal.

Thus, the initiative for digital internationalization aligns with Leuphana's internationalization efforts, demonstrating a commitment to innovation in the modern higher education landscape.

Types of digital internationalisation at Leuphana

There are two types of teaching and learning approaches that make use of digital media showing potential to facilitate internationalisation: blended learning and virtual exchange approaches.

Blended learning courses encompass a wide range of diverse types of teaching approaches that combine [synchronous](#) and [asynchronous teaching](#) phases (Wannemacher, 2016). Additionally, these courses are often characterised by [inverted or flipped classroom approaches](#) that outsource, for instance, the acquisition of knowledge to asynchronous learning phases, while joint working phases or discussions take place in synchronous learning phases (van Alten et al., 2019). Means to integrate international dimensions into these courses are self-recorded or synchronous in-person international guest lecturers.

In contrast, in virtual exchange courses, often referred to as global classrooms, students and lecturers from two or more universities from different countries come together to learn or work in an online setting (Caniglia et al., 2017; Dietz, 2020). However, virtual exchange courses are not only purely digital, often the students of both institutions take part in person in their institution and both classrooms use digital media to collaborate (hybrid teaching mode). These courses provide intercultural interaction and collaboration with partners from other cultural contexts or geographical locations as an integrated part of course work under the guidance of lecturers (O'Dowd & Dooly, 2022). Virtual exchange is characterised by students receiving course credits from their home institution and by having a strong focus on interaction and collaboration. In contrast, in [virtual mobility courses](#) students receive the credits from the foreign university.

Measures to enhance digital internationalisation at Leuphana

Based on our experiences in the project Digital Transformation Lab for Teaching and Learning we identified four areas in Leuphana's institutional services that can be enhanced to facilitate institution-wide implementation of digital internationalisation in Leuphana's degree programmes.

Measures in legislation, finance and human resources

1. **Aim:** Streamline the university's digital internationalisation efforts by establishing and communicating standardised protocols for cooperation contracts, support in coordination of the signing process and data regulation contracts for virtual exchange courses.

Present situation: The existing guidelines for the conclusion of cooperation agreements Leuphana Gazette No. 20/09 (16.12.2009) are often not known to the lecturers and are therefore often not used at the level of individual courses. There are currently no templates for cooperation agreements for individual virtual exchange courses. Initial contracts have been drawn up as part of the subproject 9 of the Digital Transformation Lab for Teaching and Learning in collaboration with the International Centre, the Legal Department and data protection officers as well as the financial department.

| Measures in legislation, finance and human resources I |
|--|
| a. Develop and provide standardised contract templates in English for teaching collaborations between institutions, specifically tailored to virtual exchange courses, incorporating comprehensive data protection regulations. |
| b. Ensure all administrative templates are available in English to accommodate international partners and stakeholders. |
| c. Create transparency about the initiation process of international teaching cooperation and ensure support during the development and signature process of the collaboration contract. Process clarity can be supported by a (digital) step by step guide for the correct procedures for establishing virtual exchange courses. |
| d. Increase data protection consultation hours dedicated to addressing data protection issues for virtual exchange courses and support for using the templates designed for virtual exchange courses. This measure could be facilitated by creating a LimeSurvey questionnaire to gather relevant information about the course offer and collaboration necessary for drafting a contract prior to consultation, including specific data protection requirements. Utilise the LimeSurvey tool to generate a preliminary draft of the cooperation contract based on the responses provided in the questionnaire |

2. **Aim:** Increase the (financial) attractiveness of cooperating and developing virtual exchange courses for internal and external lecturers and external institutions.

Present situation: Initiating virtual exchange courses is resource intensive for the institutions but also for international and domestic lecturers.

Based on interviews with domestic and international lecturers in the Digital Transformation Lab for Teaching and Learning, investing capacities in international teaching collaborations is unattractive for domestic lecturers for two reasons: First, it is unattractive to invest time in teaching material and course concepts that cannot be taken with you when you change position or institution. At the same time, it is unattractive for institutions to invest a lot of resources in

courses that are tied to individual lecturers and cannot be continued when lecturers leave the institution. Second, effort for the development of virtual exchange courses is currently not visible. This makes it difficult to find the courses and prevents exchange about teaching innovations and in addition, no external impact can be generated for lecturers (see marketing section d).

Additionally, several administrative barriers for continuation of teaching collaborations exist for international guest lecturers and contractors, among them are for example the lack of transparency regarding the length and steps involved in the invoicing of international teaching assignments, forms and information on tendering processes only available in German including difficulties in obtaining information on the invoicing of international contractors (e.g., applicability of valued added tax in European countries). Another demotivating issue for external lecturers is the lack of advanced funding of international teaching assignments, which is a particular obstacle for lecturers from low-income countries.

| Measures in legislation, finance and human resources II |
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| a. Allocate funding for the development phase of virtual exchange courses, covering expenses related to course design, technology integration, and curriculum development. |
| b. Implement a system of financial rewards or rewarding of teaching hours for faculty members engaged in resource-intensive development of digital internationalisation initiatives, such as creating virtual exchange courses or developing open educational resources. |
| c. Encourage and Support lecturers to create course materials as open educational resources (OERs) that are archived on PubData. This initiative not only ensures the sustainability of the course at the institution but also allows lecturers to retain ownership of their concepts and materials for future use, even if they change institutions. |
| d. Establish transparent processes for the payment of (international) teaching assignments, ensuring clarity and fairness in compensation especially for teaching staff from low-income countries. |
| e. Increase training of financial administration staff to enhance their understanding of the tendering processes with international contractors and their roles in facilitating international teaching assignments to create a culture of possibilities for virtual exchange. |
| f. Implement a tagging system on the university's learning management platforms (e.g., myStudy) for virtual exchange courses. This facilitates knowledge exchange between lecturers, streamlines course management, and enhances accessibility for students seeking international learning opportunities. |
| g. Provide a starter package for external lecturers in which they are informed about administrative processes of the teaching assignment (including translated forms) and, for example, condensed information on licenses and contact persons at Leuphana. The starter package could also include recommendations on how to ensure secure communication and good scientific practice in teaching in accordance with data protection law. |

Measures in technical support and media services

3. **Aim:** Optimisation of technical support and technical equipment at Leuphana for use in virtual exchange courses.

Present situation: Leuphana teaching service provides many technical tools for digital teaching that are useful for virtual exchange and blended learning such as Academic Cloud, MSTeams, Zoom, Moodle or Collaboard. It is an excellent starting point that all these tools are described regarding their functions, are data protection regulation compliant and can be used by Leuphana and partly also by external students. However, experience in using these tools including testing the support of the teaching service and the media and information centre (MIZ) shows that although these services provide help for self-help, this does not relieve the burden on lecturers sufficiently in complex virtual exchange course scenarios.

Experiences from the projects and interviews with lecturers revealed the following challenges: increased familiarisation times for e.g., setting up websites or editing videos, reduced access options for Moodle or MSTeams for internal and/or international students to teaching material exchange and communication platforms and some of the tools are not suitable for use with low Internet data bandwidths (e.g., Collaboard). Other challenges that digital international courses currently present are disparities in time zones among lecturers/institutions and students, variations in technical expertise and equipment in the collaborating country/institution as well as language barriers.

| Measures in technical support and media services |
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| a. Establish digital tutors , to record, edit and support video and audio recordings or maintaining of open educational resources or maintaining of websites and learning management platforms enabling lecturers to produce high-quality instructional materials for digital learning environments. This ensures that educational content is engaging, accessible and of high quality. |
| b. Enable the access to collaboration and learning management platforms such as MSTeams for domestic students (it is already available for international students) and open Moodle in all Schools for international students, facilitating seamless collaboration regardless of geographical location. This ensures flexibility and inclusivity in digital learning environments, accommodating diverse preferences and needs. |
| c. Provide technical support for partner universities to navigate hybrid settings, including assistance with technology integration, troubleshooting, and optimizing digital learning environments, even financial support or providing technology for the time of cooperation. This support enhances the capacity of partner institutions to effectively engage in international collaborations and deliver high-quality education in hybrid formats. |
| d. Establish legal protocols to ensure legal certainty for the automatic subtitle and translation function within the Zoom application or in MSTeams. This includes outlining privacy considerations, data protection measures, and usage policies to protect the rights of users and ensure compliance with relevant regulations. |
| e. Implement a system for event invitations that is time zone sensitive such as allowing the Zoom calendar app for use in Outlook, ensuring that event scheduling is sensitive to the availability of participants across different regions. This promotes inclusivity and maximises participation in international events and collaborations. |

| Measures in technical support and media services |
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| f. Optimise collaboration tools such as Collaboard to enhance user-friendliness and functionality for digital use in international environments. This includes improving usability and customizing features to better meet the needs of international collaborators. |
| g. Allow lecturers who specify offering blended or virtual exchange offers to book course rooms with additional time to allow for the setting up and testing of digital collaboration equipment such as cameras and microphones before the course begin, and to allow for the equipment to be packed away safely at the end of the course. Make this option explicit by for example connecting the selection in a drop-down menu not only with the room booking services but also to the AVM-services for further services regarding technical equipment and support. |

Measures in study regulations and study programme as well as curriculum development

4. **Aim:** Increase the attractiveness of digital internationalisation for international and domestic students, internal and external lecturers and international institutions.

Present situation: At present, courses for Bachelor's and Master's students can only be accredited if they are part of a study programme. Participation in digital international seminars is not visible in the students' transcript of records so that the relevance for students in whose degree programmes international experience is not required or is only optional is not obvious.

Teaching times around the globe are not synchronised. One difficulty in initiating virtual collaborations is therefore coordinating joint synchronous teaching times. At present, for example, it is not allowed or difficult to have courses start on the hour or to have different course times at Leuphana. For example, allowing 135 minutes instead of 90 minutes would permit 45 minutes of collaborative group working time with Leuphana and partner students. This would allow the instructors (Leuphana and partner) to set a collaborative working time, the international partnership would be facilitated. Students would not spend too much resources on finding joint collaboration times across time zones, working and university schedules. Another possibility would be to allow courses to take place independent from semester times in Germany given that many university semesters outside of Germany begin already in January and end in May.

| Measures in study regulations and study programme as well as curriculum development |
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| a. Introduce greater flexibility for class scheduling times and schedules to accommodate collaboration across different time zones and facilitate international cooperation. This may involve offering individual solutions, such as more flexible scheduling of courses. |
| b. Implement a certificate programme for students to formally recognise and acknowledge their international experiences and competencies. This initiative could include participation in virtual exchange programmes, international projects, language courses, and cultural immersion activities. By awarding students with a formal credential, such as a certificate or batch, the university can highlight and celebrate their global engagement and cross-cultural competencies, enhancing their academic and professional profiles |
| c. Make the course registration and assignment window more flexible to enable coordination between instructors from different institutions. This initiative would enable instructors to plan group activities more meaningfully as it would be clear a) If the course will have enough participants for collaboration to even be possible and b) how many groups there are and how these groups can be organised and managed. |

Measures in marketing and information dissemination

5. **Aim:** Prepare lecturers for complex international teaching situations and make information and support services accessible to increase quality of digital internationalisation and reduce the resource intensity of digital internationalisation.

Present situation: Although internationalisation is a declared an important goal at Leuphana, virtual exchange courses are not visible on the Leuphana website. Under the search term summer schools, for example, only individual offers from departments or summer schools from other universities can be found, but not bundled references to summer schools offered by Leuphana. There is also no information on teaching cooperation, possible contact persons for initiating cooperation at the teaching level or information on how to initiate, organise and implement teaching cooperation.

| Measures in marketing and information dissemination | |
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| a. | Create the permanent position of a digital facilitator to support lecturers in initiating and managing international collaborations. This facilitator will serve as a central point of contact for lecturers and potential collaboration partners, offering guidance and assistance throughout the development process. They will also manage an archive of current and past collaborations, provide support regarding legal, technical, and pedagogical aspects, and facilitate connections between internal lecturers at the different departments, external partner institutions and administrative services at Leuphana. |
| b. | Develop an information webpage containing Leuphana best practices in virtual exchange, along with resources and services tailored for lecturers. This webpage will serve as a valuable resource hub, offering guidance on course design, pedagogical strategies, technological tools, and media resources to support lecturers in delivering effective virtual exchange experiences. |
| c. | Create a video lecture or short training module for lecturers interested in developing virtual exchange courses. This training will cover essential topics such as curriculum design, intercultural communication, technological tools, and assessment methods, providing practical guidance and insights to support lecturers in designing and delivering high-quality virtual exchange experiences |
| d. | Establish a dedicated landing page on the Leuphana website to showcase both internal and external international summer schools. This page will provide comprehensive information, including programme details, application processes, and testimonials, serving as a centralised hub for promoting these opportunities to both internal and external stakeholders. |

Glossary of terms

Asynchronous learning: Teaching/learning activities which are designed to be performed independently at a time/location of the students' choosing. This can be, but is not limited to activities such as reading a text or completing an exercise provided on a learning management platform.

Blended-learning courses: Blended learning course formats encompass a wide range of diverse types of teaching approaches that combine synchronous and asynchronous face-to-face and digital teaching phases (Wannemacher, 2016).

Hybrid courses: Courses if synchronised interaction is promoted between on-site and online participants and if these courses are geared towards allowing both groups to participate equally in the seminar.

Inverted or flipped classroom approaches: These modes of teaching outsource the acquisition of knowledge to asynchronous learning phases, while joint work phases or discussions take place in synchronous learning phases which means that there is more time dedicated to deepen and apply knowledge in synchronous learning phases in class (van Alten et al., 2019).

Learning Management Platforms: Platforms such as Moodle administer, document and provide course material, learning content and sometimes also communication software to support learning and facilitate the management of courses.

Synchronous learning: Teaching and learning activities in which learners and instructors take part at the same time, whether in presence, online, or in a mixed setting. Synchronous teaching in virtual exchange courses means the implementation of teaching across different institutions (and time-zones) with real-time interaction (i.e. simultaneously). This can be, but is not limited to activities such as attending a course lecture or taking part in a mediated discussion.

Virtual exchange courses: Courses where two or more groups of students from different geographic locations (usually countries) collaborate on shared activities and/or a project under the guidance of lecturers from these locations (Caniglia et al., 2017; Dietz, 2020). Virtual exchange is characterised by students receiving course credits from their home institution and by having a strong focus on interaction and collaboration.

Virtual mobility: When students attend a course, certificate, degree programme or similar using digital technologies. The students are in a geographically different location from where the course takes place. This is often used to fulfil study-abroad requirements (UNESCO IESALC 2023). Students receive the credits from the foreign university.

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