Ulysseus COIL Handbook: A Practical Guide for Educators

Connecting Students Internationally: Transforming Learning through Collaborative Online International Learning (COILs)

January 2025

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Introduction

This handbook is designed for educators aiming to design and implement a Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) initiative within the Ulysseus European University alliance, which comprises eight diverse universities. An Ulysseus COIL is a form of virtual collaboration that connects students and teachers from at least two Ulysseus European University partners through online platforms. This approach enables collaborative learning experiences without the need for physical travel, fostering intercultural competence and global engagement. A COIL is not a new course; rather, it is an innovative methodology designed to enhance the delivery of an existing course.
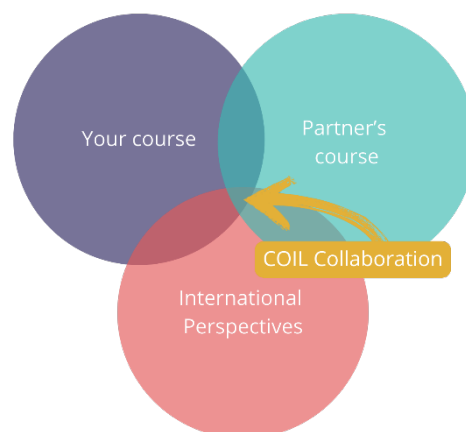

Figure 1 COIL Graph (source: Ulysseus Dissemination Office)

COIL Explained

- **Academic Content Integration:** COIL Incorporates academic lessons with cross-cultural communication and collaboration for both students and teachers. This integration can be developed over a series of lessons or throughout an entire course.
- **Innovative Teaching Approach:** COIL utilises online technologies to bring global learning and cross-cultural experiences into the classroom.
- **Collaborative Pedagogy**: COIL involves collaborative teaching and learning across institutions in two or more countries, facilitated through online communication. This approach can be integrated into any course format under the guidance of instructors.

Source: Ulysseus COIL Webinar

Key Objectives

The Ulysseus European University is committed to shaping global citizens and equipping them for the challenges of the future. One way this vision is realised is through Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL), which provides students with opportunities to connect virtually and collaborate across borders. To support this initiative, the educators are incentivised to enhance and internationalise their teaching by collaborating with faculty from another Ulysseus partner institution.

Reasons to offer a COIL

1. **Collaboration:** Take this opportunity to collaborate with fellow Ulysseus European University educators.
2. **Innovation:** Pioneer innovative online educational activities.
3. **Student value:** Provide your students with an enriching international experience from within the classroom while fostering collaboration across disciplines and partner universities.

This initiative promotes interactive and collaborative teaching formats, supports virtual and blended mobility for students and staff, and enhances joint teaching activities to build sustainable networks within the Ulysseus alliance.

Components of a COIL

- **Collaboration:** Involves at least one partner from the Ulysseus alliance.
- **Curriculum Integration:** COIL is not a new course; it should be embedded into an existing course.
- **Utilisation of Technology:** Involves using communication platforms such as Ulysseus Moodle, MS Teams, Zoom, Google Docs, Facebook, Telegram, WhatsApp, etc.
- **Cultural Exchange:** Facilitates deep connections between students to enhance effective collaboration.
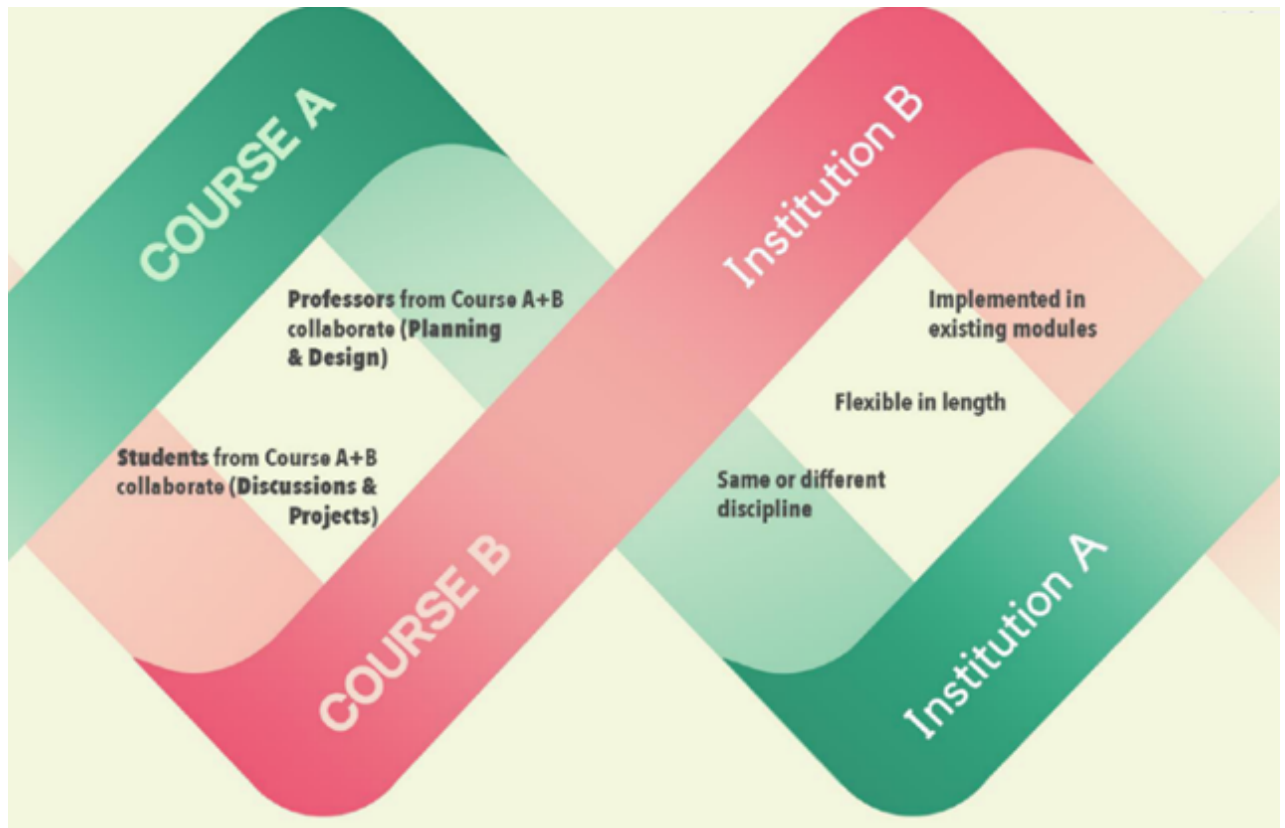
Figure 2 Components of COIL (Source: Berlin Centre for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education)

Designing a COIL

Step 1: How to Start?

To begin designing a COIL course, consider the following key areas to ensure your course is ready for an online, international and collaborative learning experience.

A step-by-step COIL checklist can be found on page 9.

- COIL Course Suitability
  Does my course align with the Ulysseus mission or Ulysseus topics? Is the language of instruction English or another mutual language that can be understood by all participants?

- Technology-Enhanced Teaching
  Am I prepared to teach my course using technology-enhanced methods? Do I have access to the technological platform(s) to support the learning objectives? Will my course be delivered synchronously (in real time), asynchronously (at the students' own pace), or as a blended approach (combining both modes)?

- **Institutional Support**
  Do I have the support of my institution to move forward with this COIL initiative? Assess whether the necessary resources, encouragement, and approval are in place.

- **Partner Selection Critieria**
  Do I already have a partner? If not, what criteria should I use to select a suitable partner? Please refer to the match-making platforms on page 7.

Figure 3 Designing a COIL (source Ulysseus COIL Webinar)

Figure 3 How to start (source: Ulysseus COIL Webinar)

Step 2: Professors'/Teachers' Collaboration

In step 2, the collaborating Professors (A & B) touch base on the following points:

- Defining learning goals for students (of both Professors) involved.
- Determine the length of the COIL (recommended to be between **5 – 14 weeks**).
- Determine if the course will be delivered synchronously, (in real-time) asynchronously (at students' own pace) or as a mix of both modes of delivery?
- Design collaborative and comparative activities.
- Decide on the methodology and technology tools for collaboration.
- Decide on a grading and monitoring approach for student work and learning. It is recommended that Professor A grades their own students, while Professor B does the same for theirs. This ensures that grading aligns with the respective standards of their institutions.

- Other topics that need to be discussed include language use, timing and calendars, harmonizing COIL module learning goals with overall course objectives, methods of assessment and classroom management issues.

Important Information: The collaborating teachers do not need to be from the same field; finding a common point of intersection is sufficient. However, collaborations within the same field are also encouraged.

Step 3: Students' Collaboration

In step 3, the students begin their collaboration.

- Develop effective international/ intercultural teams through icebreakers and other team building/ bonding activities.
- Discuss course assignments and content over selected/agreed technological platforms.
- Complete project-based activity as part of the coursework which is presented at the end of the COIL.
- Reflect on both the academic content of the course and the intercultural exchange that takes place throughout the process.
- Students, regardless of whether they belong to the same group, can collaborate and support one another in overcoming challenges along the way.

Challenges

Skills such as problem-solving, decision-making, language competencies, conflict resolution, tackling dilemmas, negotiation, and leadership are essential in the COIL environment. While tasks may be approached differently even within a single cultural context, these variations are often magnified in a multicultural setting like COIL. Such diversity can sometimes make it difficult to comprehend the actions and behaviours of others.

Partner Collaboration: how to find your COIL partner?

If you are interested in collaboration but unsure of whom to partner with, consider exploring the following **match-making options**:

- [Ulysseus Experts Database](): Log in with your university credentials and create an expert profile to make it easy for others to discover you. Use the search engine to find valuable contacts that align with your topic.

- [Ulysseus Curriculums Search engine](): Find potential partners through the search engine.

- [Ulysseus Local Mobility Officer](): Reach out to your local Mobility Officer for assistance with matchmaking opportunities.

- **Ulysseus Linkedin page:** Expand your network by connecting on LinkedIn.

Contact Details

Each university has a dedicated Local Ulysseus Mobility Officer. If you have any questions or need support in finding a collaboration partner, feel free to contact them via the Ulysseus Mobility Officers Contact Page.

Financial Support

As a COIL connects two (or more) existing courses in an online setting, additional costs may not necessarily arise. However, depending on the specific needs of the collaboration, expenses for technical support, software, or other resources might be required. In such cases, it is the responsibility of the instructors to arrange funding internally within their respective institutions.

In the period of 2024-2027 Ulysseus regularly offers a Seed Fund Call for teachers, with limited spots available. This Seed Fund provides financial support for teachers to meet in person and plan their COIL. For more information about the Seed Fund Call and its schedule, please contact your Local Mobility Officer, or keep an eye on the Calls and Opportunities Ulysseus webpage.

COIL Summary

A brief summary is provided in the graph below.

Figure 4 COIL Summary (Source: SUNY COIL Centre 1)

Useful Resources

- [Defining COIL and Distinguishing it from Virtual Exchange](#)
- [Recording Webinar Introduction to Ulysseus COIL](#) *("To access the COIL example within the Ulysseus Alliance presentation, skip to the 27-minute mark of the video.")*
- [PPT Presentation Ulysseus COIL Webinar](#) (Scroll down to find the button to download the PPT presentation)
- [Ulysseus Calls and Opportunities](#)
- [Ulysseus Video Platform](#)
- [Ulysseus Website](#)

Annex: COIL Checklist

1   Planning Phase

Institutional Support
☐ Do I have the support of my institution?

Define Objectives
☐ Is my course a good candidate for COIL? To determine this, consider whether you can answer "yes" to the following questions:
- o   Does my course align with the Ulysseus mission or Ulysseus topics?
- o   Is the language of instruction English or in another common language that is accessible and understandable to all participants?

☐ Does my course encourage active student learning and teamwork?
☐   Will my course be delivered synchronously, (in real-time) asynchronously (at students' own pace) or as a mix of both modes of delivery?
☐ Am I prepared to teach my course using technology-enhanced methods?
☐ Have I identified the goals and learning outcomes for the COIL project?
☐ Have I identified technological platform(s) that effectively supports achieving the learning goals of my course?
☐ Are the objectives aligned with both institutions' curriculum requirements?

Find a Partner
☐ Have I connected with a faculty member from the Ulysseus alliance? (See 'Partner Collaboration' above)
☐ Have we discussed mutual interests, fields, and potential points of collaboration?

Agree on Scope
☐ Have we determined the course/module where COIL will be integrated?
☐ Have we defined the duration and key deliverables of the COIL project?

Cultural Awareness
☐ Have I prepared to address cultural differences and inclusivity in the project?
☐ Have I considered the time zones, holidays, and schedules of both institutions?

2   Design Phase

Orientation
☐ Have we provided students with an introduction to the COIL project and expectations?

☐ Have we offered training sessions or materials for using the selected platforms?

Facilitation
☐ Have I planned for regular check-ins with students and the partner faculty?
☐ Am I prepared to address challenges such as communication barriers or technical issues?

Engagement and Communication
☐ Have we established clear communication channels and protocols?
☐ Are there opportunities for students to reflect on and share their experiences?

3 Evaluation and Follow-Up Phase
Project Review
☐ Have we ensured that the Ulysseus feedback survey has been sent to the students who participated in the COIL? (please contact your Local Mobility Officer to receive this survey)
☐ Have we evaluated whether the learning goals were achieved?

Sustainability
☐ Have we discussed ways to improve and continue the collaboration in the future?
☐ Have we documented best practices and lessons learned for future COIL projects?