



Handbook

Writing a Virtual Assignment and Learning Unit



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Summary

In this report you can read how we made a virtual assignment and a learning unit. You read about the pitfalls and some tips and advice. Reading this enables you to can build your own virtual assignment or a learning unit.

In the first chapter we describe how we started and developed the subject of this project. In chapter two you can read how we developed a virtual assignment including tips and advice. Chapter three discusses how we created the learning unit. In the fourth chapter we describe our conclusion after finishing the Learning Unit.

We hope this report will serve as a manual to enable you to develop your own Virtual Assignment and Learning Unit.



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1. How to start?

In this chapter, we describe how we started developing our virtual assignment(VA) and learning unit(LU) and how you can start a virtual assignment.

The first step involved first getting to know each other during the Kick-off, where the collaborating schools came together in one location. It is important to be familiar with each other, know each other's schools and get to know each other's countries. This includes:

- How many students are in a school from the same course?
- What facilities are available at each school?
- What does the curriculum look like?
- What educational levels are offered?
- What is the age range of the students?
- What does the teaching approach involve for each course?

It has been shown, for instance, that the education system in the Netherlands differs in terms of content and structure of courses compared to abroad.

If all the partner schools involved have a clear picture of what the other school and programme are like, the differences will be clear and you can eventually come up with a good programme that you can offer the other schools that includes topics and activities that they don't have, know or can't do themselves.

We quickly agreed on a topic for our own Unit with the other schools from Norway and Finland, as they had already had a tour of our school and, as a result, had formed a clear picture and could make comparisons with the potential of their own school. For other courses, this process may take more time but it is an essential first step to make clear agreements on the topics required.

We then took time to work on the topics and think carefully about what you can offer yourself. Eventually, we presented a plan to the other schools and came to an agreement.

As a means of keeping in touch after this meeting, we held Team Meetings at certain time intervals where we discussed various points. These meetings are especially important because, through prolonged contact, you can learn more about each other.



2. The Virtual Assignment

This chapter discusses the development and implementation of the Virtual assignment.

This online module has been developed over time. While doing so, we asked the question; What fits with our learning unit? What is actionable?

In our enthusiasm, our pitfall was that we had initially made the VA way too big, this became clear when we later reached the point of implementing the assignments. The question we had to answer was when could we actually run the VA and how much time all schools effectively have for the assignment. It became clear during discussions on this, that all partner schools could devote a maximum of one hour of teaching time per week to this. We had chosen an assignment that was largely done in present-time and so required a few hours of class time. After discussing how to implement it, the remit became smaller and there was a clear definition. We had the lessons conducted during the English subject and also shared this suggestion with the other schools.

From the previous VAs during this pilot phase, there had already been feedback and evaluation. This revealed that that interaction needed to be better assured. This meant that a joint conclusion was selected for this VA in the end. We have planned this joint conclusion in agreement with the other schools on the day and time a few months in advance. As a result, this was fixed in the schedule and everyone could work with their students towards completing the assignment for the day. We have chosen to use eTwinning for assignment delivery and submission of the completed assignments. For joint closure, we used Teams and the option of gathering students together in meeting rooms.

Key questions to consider:

- Beforehand, make sure every student can participate in Teams, this caused problems for some students. We worked with a large group of students during the VA where we made small mixed groups with students from different countries. Arranging the students in groups in the meeting rooms was not always easy and should be set up well in advance.
- At the beginning of the joint closing, in preparation for the physical learning unit that would take place at our school, we introduced ourselves as teachers and showed a virtual tour (video) of the school. The aim of this activity was to inspire the students so that they would sign up for our learning unit.

After the VA, an evaluation took place with the relevant colleagues from abroad who were also partly or fully involved in the implementation of the online meeting. The evaluation revealed that it was a useful conclusion but that there is more to be gained from also embarking on a joint opening of the VA. This is where we modify the planning for the future. During the course of implementation, this was difficult because of the different holidays

during the start-up of the VA per school. It was also clear that the assignment and completion of the VA need not be more extensive.



3. Learning Unit

In this chapter, we discuss how we began the development of our two-week learning unit that takes place face-to-face. We will also discuss how and why we made certain choices so we can advise you how to do make your choices.

How to start?

During the joint launch of this project with the other schools, decisions were made on the subjects of the units and which learning outcomes were to be achieved. The next task is to get a clear picture of what the requirements of the funding provider are, described in the project application. With clear and precise guidelines, good choices can be made in terms of the programme, accommodation and additional activities.

The requirements to be met by the pilot were:

- Involve level 2 students in the project.
- Guest students visit an internship company for 4 days and participate in work.
- Guest students undergo 10 days of classes at school
- Guest students work with their own local students on a joint group assignment
- Involve/integrate own students of similar level in teaching module.
- Integrate foreign students into one class.
- Involving teachers in (English-language) lessons
- Involve other students in lessons and field trips

Achievability of the programme

As we had developed a clear programme and have ourselves been working in our programme for many years in different levels and years of training, we have a clear idea about the format of classes and field trips. The programme was built on the timetables of our own students. After the programme was finalised in draft, we discussed it with our colleagues and indicated when we needed help. We also deliberately involved some colleagues in our LU to increase the impact on our own teaching.

We outline our comprehensive programme below. Class days are from 9.30 to 17.00. End time was variable. Each day started with a communal breakfast at 8.00.

| Program LA Clusius College Alkmaar September- Oktober | | |
|---|--|---|
| Sun 25 Sept | Arriving in the Netherlands | Travel from railstation to the hostel |
| | First week | evening |
| Mon 26 | -Welcome, get to know each other and the school -Working in the stable - First lesson off driving | Dinner together |
| Tue 27 | -driving lesson (2) -First theoretical lesson about the Dutch sport horse -Working in the stable with level 2 students | |
| Wed 28 | 'landbouwdag' Alkmaar Agricultural day Alkmaar. | Dinner at school, making their own Dutch food |



| | | |
|-------------|---|---|
| | Students visit this day and helping the students and who they are linked | |
| Thurs 29 | -driving lesson(3) -second lesson the Dutch sport horses, judging the horse -Introduction of the group assignment of this Unit -Excursion to a big riding school | Students eat together with the dutch students |
| Fri 30 | -driving lesson (4) - Excursions close to the school: A stable were you can have your holiday and stay in a big safari tent KWPN sporthorses | |
| Sat/Sun 1/2 | Visit Amsterdam, travelling around the city, visit a very old riding school in the centre of the city. Visit the famous museum 'Het Rijksmuseum' where you can see the painting of Rembrandt | |
| | Second Week | Evening |
| Mon 3 | -Working at school with the students of the second year of level 2 -Hour for working on the assignment of the LU - Driving lesson (5) -First lesson about the Frisian Horse | |
| Tue 4 | -Students go to the internship of the linked student. Working together with this student on the company | Students eat together |
| Wed 5 | -Driving lesson (6) -Second lesson about the Frisian horse, judging the horse -visit a big horse riding school 'Manege Beukers' | Eating together after the visit Cooking their own food of their country. |
| Thurs 6 | -Excursion of the province 'Friesland'. Visit the biggest company of the Netherlands with Dutch jumping sporthorses. VDL stud, in Bears. -visit a big stallion breeding company of Frisian horses. 'De Mersken' in Siegerswoude -Maybe we can visit a third company, there are a lot off company's on the way back. | Eating together at the school in Leeuwarden and visit the other Learning Unit from the 'Aeres'. |
| Fri 7 | -driving lesson (7) -Finishing the group assignment -presentation of the assignment | |



Key points

Number of students

Think very carefully about how many students you would like to invite. An important consideration in this is how many teachers are available. We have indicated a maximum of 12 students. This way, two teachers could always be available for lessons and transport to class locations or field trips. Besides 12 students, you can have a minimum of four students of your own on an ongoing basis. We have taken into account that there are several field trips and you can then only take 16 students in two school buses.

With hindsight, the group of 9 students was big enough and particularly for the first time, we recommend not making the group too big. This is certainly true for carrying out the practical parts of the program.

Facilities/Accommodation

Our foreign students stayed in a Hostel a 20-minute walk from our school. This allowed them to walk to and from school independently. At this hostel, they were not able to cook, which with the busy schedule in this case was convenient.

Decide how and where students will stay and what they should do independently. This includes breakfast, lunch and dinner. Can they do their own shopping or does it have to be arranged? Is it possible to transport them every morning and evening?

The decision to have breakfast together at school every day made group formation work very well. The same applies to cooking together with Dutch students from our own course. Starting and finishing the day together ensures better integration of the entire group.

Tips for implementation

- A clear understanding by the LU organisation about the structure of budget/finances is preferable so that good choices can be made.

- Create an app group in advance so that consultation can take place on arrival. This allows direct transport from the airport to be arranged. It is important to discuss in good time whether students will come to the class location or accommodation independently, or whether transport will be arranged by the host school.

- Make a checklist of which documents you all need to provide before operating the unit

What's useful to make/organise:

- Teacher manual (So that the unit can be taken over if necessary)
- Roadmap for all teachers and support colleagues involved
- Student book with all necessary (teaching) information
- Student meeting in advance
- welcome letter



Engage level 2 students

We constructed our programme around the requirements from the project which meant that the group of foreign students also had to interact with our level 2 students. The programme was designed so that on level 2 project/practice day, they were matched with these students. So they worked with these students in the stable and then had a practical lesson together. Consequently, for our students, Internationalisation took place at home. They talked to the visiting students about their courses, education in different countries and, of course, the differences that all students had already experienced.

Internship

The project requirement was for the visiting students to do four days of internship. Due to the programme and its timing, it has not been practical to spend four days on internship. The class in which the students were integrated did not go on work experience for four days in this two-week LU. They also had their internship on the project's start days, Monday and Tuesday. It was impossible to send the visiting students on their first days of internship after their LU starts.

Difficulties during the preparation period:

- The number of work experience days puts too much pressure on the programme; we made a conscious decision to limit this and let students work in the stables at school, linking foreign students to other classes, e.g. level 2 classes.

Joint group assignment

The students are required to complete a joint assignment during the project. This assignment is partly linked to the topic in the virtual assignment. This assignment also introduced students to the differences in horse husbandry in different countries. It is important at the beginning of the first week that students are clear about what the assignment entails and what kind of information they need to collect.

Involvement of our own students

At the very start of the project several years ago, there was an agreement among all schools that the learning units were developed for level 4 students who are no longer in the first year of the programme. As a result, you only need to consider where and when it suits to carry out your project in your own educational programming. This should obviously be coordinated with the schools involved and participating.

4. Final preparations

In the final weeks before the LU, there are moments each day when you need to spend some time working on the project. Plan this in to ensure you do have time for this. There are always things that



may change. We received a last-minute cancellation from two students. This means you have to book one less room and accordingly cancel a room, but also arrange the cancellation of any activities you have planned.

As we had created an app group, we were able to keep in touch with the students the moment they arrived in the Netherlands. This meant they could always reach someone. We also chose to pick up the students from the train station and take them and their belongings to the Hostel. These choices had been made together with the foreign teachers. The schools also viewed this differently. There were several students from Finland whose school felt it was important for them to do everything independently, while it was made clear from the Swedish and Norwegian schools that it would be helpful if the students were given some supervision. A working method emerged from this in agreement with all partners involved.

Preparing students for travel and the learning unit

This chapter provides guidelines to guide teachers in informing traveling students partaking in the project Amoove21. Preparing students for a trip abroad can be an extensive process and this chapter may provide some clarity and guidance.

Starting point

The participating class will have been informed of the aim and content of Amoove21 from the onset of the Virtual Assignment belonging to a Learning Unit. It will also have been made clear to the students that although an entire class participates in the VA, only a few, usually two, students will be selected to travel to the host school.

Selection

Nearing the end of the VA, somewhere between handing in the VA and peer feedback, there is a unit teacher meeting. The host school will provide the other schools with a selection assignment and Europass document. The assignment can be distributed amongst students interested in attending the LU. Out of the selection assignments, teachers of the sending school will select their own students and provide them with the Europass document. The completed selection assignment and Europass documents will be gathered by the sending school and forwarded to the host school.

Travel preparation

Traveling students will receive a travel information package containing the following:

- General information about the aim of the project
- Dates of LU
- Address of host school and student lodging
- Itinerary of LU provided by host school
- Letter with relevant information for parents/guardians
- Pack list provided by host school
- Overview of relevant contacts of sending school *and* host school
- List of contacts in case of emergency
- Overview of timeline and/ or deadlines for submitting required documents
- Instructions for booking a flight, or person to contact regarding booking
- Instructions and information regarding travel requirements of the host country



- Information about travel- and medical insurance
- Reminder to sort out medical certificates and/or custom documents in case of medication use
- Clear cost information; which costs will be for the student, which for the sending school, which for the host school
- Reminder to sort out/notify apprenticeships, work experiences or internships
- Reminder to notify teachers about absence in case of tests and/or exams
- General rules of conduct during school trips
- General rules of conduct on social media prior to, during and after the LU

This package will be issued to the selected students no less than six weeks prior to the start of the LU. Flights should be booked asap in order to enable the host school to make arrangement for transport to and from the airport.

A template for the travel information package can be found in the appendix section of this manual.



5. Evaluation and conclusion

In this chapter, we outline how we approached evaluation in our pilot. As we ran a pilot, the assessment is also widely conducted and outcomes shared. In the chapter, we also reflect on the findings that emerged from the evaluation questions to conclude by identifying key points that you should definitely think about when developing a module.

It is important to evaluate the module broadly to get a good idea of how it worked. Think of the students and visiting lecturers involved but also, of course, your own educational institution. Is it possible to implement this module again in this way?

Survey

We have conducted a written survey among the nine foreign students and three home-based students. In addition, visiting teachers also completed the survey. It was important for us to conduct the survey to get a picture of level of satisfaction on all the different points such as facilities and programme content. The questions asked in the survey provide us with enough feedback to optimise this project. The survey could be completed anonymously, 1/3 used this, the others put their names on it.

All foreign students described the points below as "most surprising":

- Cultural differences
- The large scale of horse farming in the Netherlands
- The differences in keeping horses compared to their own land

All the foreign students indicated that they found the practical instructions most instructive.

When asked what they enjoyed most about the project, all students (foreign and domestic) indicated that they found the contact with each other and other students and the teachers the most enjoyable.

Almost all foreign students indicated that the programme was very complete but that they would have liked to have ridden horses as well. There is also one student who would have liked more free time.

In the pilot, they had one day of real work experience with a student from the class they were paired with. When asked if they would have liked to do this more often, all nine indicated that one placement day was just right.

During the pilot, besides practical driving lessons, there were also two theoretical lessons and two theoretical/practical lessons. These lessons lasted 65 minutes. When asked whether they found this too much, enough or too little theoretical teaching, all nine students also indicated that it was just right. There has been a comment on the length of the teaching days, that this is slightly long.

All nine students indicated that the hostel, their room and facilities were good. They give an average of 8.6 for these three points. In this respect, one student gave a 6 for her room because it did not have a window.



All nine students expressed dissatisfaction with the food, too much bread. They fortunately reported right at the beginning of the two-week pilot that they missed their hot meal at lunch time. We tried to resolve this on some days by making soup and pancakes for them. On several occasions, they indicated that they liked the evening meal, which was usually ordered at school and also eaten here. They also found the breakfast time in the morning to be positive, yet they gave a 4.3 as an average rating. Nevertheless, the food in the Netherlands being considered less nutritious and eating less meat and hot food and more bread has negatively affected this figure.

All nine foreign students gave a 10 to the teachers who supervised this project throughout the two weeks. On top of this, a lot of feedback was given that they felt welcomed and at ease by the teachers which made the weeks a great success. We also received feedback from visiting teachers that it made students feel safe.

As a host school, the final conclusion for us is that we can look back on two very successful teaching weeks. It emerged from the students and teachers that the supervising teachers have the most influence on the success of a project and the security and atmosphere for the students.

For the next time around, we would like to use the same hostel and leave the ratios of class, practical, excursions unchanged. For us, an area for improvement lies in the food. On the point that we did not meet the requirement of 4 work experience days, we do not need to adjust this either because the students unanimously indicated that this is an appropriate balance. The field trips together with the work experience day gave a good idea of business operations in the Netherlands.

Final Conclusion

Having written this report outlining how to develop and implement a virtual assignment and a two-week learning unit, we can conclude that integrating and organising such international activities in teaching is quite possible provided you have the right facilities and teachers with a broad understanding of the course in question. The total number of nine guest students proved to work fine and this number is a guideline for follow-up groups.

For proper integration into the course, an understanding of the different learning years, education plans and schedule of one's own teaching is a must. This increases the feasibility and viability of the project. On top of this, the commitment and involvement of appropriate teachers proves to be of immense importance for the atmosphere and the creation of a safe and pleasant learning environment for the visiting students, as well as for their own students and colleagues.

With the points described in this report, a good teaching module can be developed and put into practice.



Appendix



Student travel information package

Amoojve21



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Amoove21; an international educational project

Amoove21 is an Erasmus+ KA2 project which brings together students and professionals from five Agricultural VET (Vocational Education and Training) colleges in four different countries. In December 2019, teachers from Clusius College in the Netherlands, Munkagards Gymnasiet in Sweden, Skjetlein Videregaende Skole in Norway, Axxell in Finland and Aeres in the Netherlands started working together on this project.

Within Amoove21, agricultural VET students, teachers and professionals are working together and learning from each other by following a virtual assignment and an international learning unit. These accredited units form a coherent module which starts in your own classroom where students follow a virtual unit by using eTwinning, followed by an actual training at the different VET college's and local organizations. Students will meet other students online and in real life to learn about the similarities and differences in their field of education and culture. Amoove21 focusses on three main fields of education:

- Livestock & dairy farming
- Equine & horse management
- Animal care



You have been selected!

Where are you going?

| | |
|---|--|
| Learning unit | |
| Dates | |
| School | |
| Address of school | |
| Address of hotel/hostel/boarding house | |

Program

Below you will find the program of the two weeks during which you will participate in the learning unit.

| Program | | |
|----------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| Date | Activities | Location |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |

Pack list

This pack list has been provided by your host school, make sure to bring every item on it, with you.

- <Item>
- <Item>
- <Item>
- <Item>
- <Item>
- <Item>
- <Item>
- <Item>
- <Item>
- <Item>



Rules and regulations

During this exchange trip the following do's and don't apply. Read them carefully and behave accordingly.

| Do | Don't |
|---|---|
| Prepare for and be respectful of the culture of the country you will visit. | Buy, accept or drink alcohol and/or drugs. You <u>will</u> be sent home. Substance (ab)use in any way is <u>forbidden</u> . |
| Ask questions respectfully; you are here to learn! | Behave in an unsocial manner. |
| Work together with your fellow students. | Remain with your own classmate all the time; please mix and mingle. You are here to meet new people. |
| Join the whole program. | |
| Ask help from the teachers if you feel uncomfortable in any way. | |

Emergency contact

| | | |
|--------------------|-------------|-------------------------|
| Own school | Name | Telephone number |
| | | |
| Host school | Name | Telephone number |
| | | |

Contact list of your own school

| Name | Email address | Telephone | Situation |
|------|---------------|-----------|-----------|
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |

Contact list of the host school

| Name | Email address | Telephone | Situation |
|------|---------------|-----------|-----------|
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |

Deadlines

The table below shows you when and where to hand in documents. Please do not miss these deadlines.

| Document | Where | Deadline |
|----------|-------|----------|
| | | |



| | | |
|----------------------------|-----------------------|---------------|
| Europass application | <insert person/email> | <insert date> |
| <insert required document> | <insert person/email> | <insert date> |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |



Your journey

Book your flight

Contact your international coordinator or your designated teacher for details on booking your flight and schedule other travel arrangements. Your contact person for this is:

<insert name of contact here>

Travel requirements for your destination

Make sure you are aware of travel requirements. Do you need a passport? Do you need vaccines? Do you need certain documents? This information can be found on the following website:

<insert information website here>

Insurance

Think about health care insurance and travel insurance. If you have insurance, check the terms and conditions. Are you fully covered for your stay abroad? Your international coordinator or designated teacher can give you more information.

What to do with medication?

If you use medication, check if you need documents to take your medication into your destination. Sometimes you need a document signed by your doctor. To find out if this applies to you, contact your pharmacy, doctor and the website of the airport.

Make sure you tell the contact person of the host school about your medication use. In case of emergency, this information can be vital.



Your stay

Visiting another country is exciting, but can be intimidating, too! Maybe you have never travelled so far from home. Perhaps you don't know anything about the country of your destination. Maybe you haven't shopped for food in a supermarket, or you have never cooked a meal for yourself. How do things work in the country you will visit? And what about speaking another language for two weeks?

All these things might make you a little insecure, and that is ok. Remember that you are not alone. You are going on a study trip and you will learn a lot. Not only about your field of study, but also about being abroad. You will also learn a lot about yourself. Make sure you follow the Do's and Don'ts on page 2, have an open mind and enjoy this unique experience.

Social media

We live in a world of social media, and of course you want to share your experience! Always check with companies and people that you visit during the learning unit, if they agree with being posted on social media. If you do not know, ask them. If the answer is 'No', do not put them on social media. Remember privacy laws. And when you post, make sure your post is appropriate and fun!

However, during lessons, educational talks, company visits we ask you to be respectful. Do not use your phone during those times, except to take pictures if permitted. You can post, message, or call people later.



Checklist

| | Done |
|---|------|
| Check if your passport/other identification is valid throughout the trip | |
| Book a flight/train and other required transportation | |
| Pass a copy of this document on to your parents/guardian/emergency contact | |
| All required documents handed in | |
| Check if your debit card works abroad | |
| Medical certificates and/or custom documents in case of medication use | |
| Pack every item on pack list | |
| Pack your laptop/notebook and charger | |
| Notify internship companies, work etc of your absence | |
| Notify teachers about absence in case of tests and/or exams and missing lessons | |
| Travel insurance | |
| Health care insurance | |