

# FORUM

MEMBER  
MAGAZINE

*Discussing international education*



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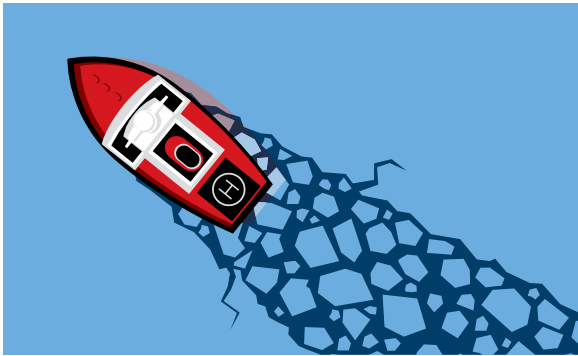
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06

“International educators have a responsibility, and a unique capacity, to help turn the tide”

UNIQUELY POSITIONED TO LEAD  
ON CLIMATE ACTION

19

“Sustainability is a wider concept than climate, and internationalisation is far more than mobility”

SUSTAINABILITY THROUGH INTERNATIONALISATION



22

“Sustainability is a journey, not a checklist”

IN CONVERSATION WITH DANIELLA TILBURY



30

“Equitable access to education will require models for distance and hybrid education across borders”

BROADENING ACCESS TO ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES



# EDITORIAL

The Spring 2022 issue of *Forum* looks at the growing body of enquiry and reflection on how international education intersects with our changing climate. This question has taken on significant prominence in the last several years in light of two profoundly important – and ironically contradictory – truths. On the one hand, the physical mobility associated with international education contributes directly to climate degradation. At the same time, international collaboration in higher education can and must play an active role in addressing this worldwide crisis.

As we are now aware, the 2021 UN Climate Change Conference, COP26, shone an unflinching spotlight on the urgent challenges currently facing the environment and the impact of human activity on the planet. So how do we, as international educators, reconcile the environmental impact of our work, and what are the alternatives? Internationalisation in higher education can be understood as a direct contributor to the climate emergency, particularly via the extensive use of air travel. However, it should also be seen as a key source of innovative solutions that will support the global effort to deter further degradation and enhance environmental resilience and regeneration.

Articles selected for this edition of *Forum* are drawn from individuals, institutions and associations from across Europe and further afield. In some cases, they present case studies of how particular institutions or groups of international educators have sought to frame local responses, such as the enhancement of online international learning or the integration of sustainability initiatives into

the curriculum. Other articles question where the responsibility for greening international education lies, be it with students themselves, with their institutions, with national governments or within the funding parameters of EU programmes. In that context, the policy framework for action is brought into question, with reflections on how to strategically align international higher education and climate goals, as well as how to empower changemakers at all levels.

I am delighted that Professor Daniella Tilbury agreed to be interviewed for this issue, given her academic and policy work on sustainability as a key agenda for the future of higher education. From Gibraltar, and formerly the inaugural Vice-Chancellor and CEO of the University of Gibraltar, Professor Tilbury reflects on how her career in education for sustainability was kick-started by an international study experience in Australia. Indeed, she views international education as an accelerator of change, pointing to the fact that cross-border travel by students and staff challenges assumptions and bursts socio-cultural bubbles. That being said, she joins with other authors in this issue to call for a smarter and more efficient approach to travel. Compellingly, Professor Tilbury states that sustainability itself is a journey, rather than a checklist. She calls on higher education institutions to mainstream sustainability concerns and considerations into all courses so that future decision-makers, leaders and practitioners embed sustainability in their everyday thinking and planning across all professions.

In addition to the interview, I'm pleased that some of the authors in this issue have a close association with the



Climate Action Network for International Educators (CANIE). From its origins as a collective of concerned practitioners hosting meetings on the sidelines of international education conferences, CANIE has grown to become a key influencer of policy and practice at institutions worldwide, with chapters established in Europe, Oceania, and the Americas.

With my thanks to fellow members of the EAIE Publications Committee Dr Jos Beelen and Han Aarts who joined me in reviewing submissions; I hope that you enjoy reading this edition of *Forum*.

— DOUGLAS PROCTOR, EDITOR  
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## *Sebastian Fernandes*

Chief operating officer, FPP  
Having studied in five countries and speaking almost five languages, Sebastian is truly a citizen of the world. He is passionate about gardening and has many amazing trees.

## *Jack Townsend*

Sales and marketing director, FFP  
Though he has never studied abroad, Jack has spent the last five years living in Spain, Italy, and South Africa. He loves to be outdoors with his golf clubs or his camera.

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With expertise in sustainability and government policy, Pii-Tuulia is also a co-founder and board member of the Climate Action Network for International Educators (CANIE).

# THE CLIMATE CRISIS CALLS FOR COIL





Three examples of Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) projects bringing together Switzerland, the United States, Canada, the Middle East and North Africa show that if this technique is used well, it can be a hugely beneficial and sustainable way for students and lecturers to broaden their horizons.

The vision of higher education as a “change agent”<sup>1</sup> that can address “accelerating environmental change, resource scarcity, increasing inequality and injustice” seems to have advanced with the pandemic, which is driving virtualisation in education.

In recent years, much has been said and written about virtual exchange<sup>2</sup> and one specific form called Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL). Both have increased in popularity with lockdowns and border closures.

The pandemic and its effects led the FHNW School of Business in Switzerland to start a virtual exchange programme for students. This proved an attractive offer for partner universities and students alike, with the transition from on-site to online lectures being implemented at very short notice.

Görlinger and Nussbaum<sup>3</sup> have shown that student mobility has a clear impact on the carbon footprint of a university. Sustainable alternatives to physical student mobility are therefore a necessity rather than a choice. At the same time, it is only fair to create as many opportunities to participate in international learning as possible and to no longer discriminate against students who do not have the financial means to travel, who have family commitments or who lack the energy or courage. Despite a “dramatic” rise in international student mobility<sup>4</sup>, it is beneficial for the climate that many students – in Switzerland, an estimated 80% – do not travel. The reality is that these students have, to date, both protected the climate and minimised universities’ carbon footprints.

In this article, we will share three examples that demonstrate how lecturers at the FHNW and partner institutions created international learning opportunities, in line with their universities’ sustainability and wider outreach policies, that had a low environmental impact and were open to all students.

#### EXAMPLE ONE: THE ‘PADLET’

Our first example, a COIL initiative between two marketing lecturers from the FHNW and California State University, Monterey Bay, in the United States, consisted of a joint online interactive board called a padlet, where students from their two global marketing classes contributed posts and comments.

The lecturers allocated 15 minutes each week in class to allow students to post, respond to posts or reflect on learnings from these posts, particularly regarding cultural differences. The padlet was created in August 2021; students started using it a month later and finished in December.

The key challenge for this COIL effort was to establish a common understanding and trust between two lecturers who never met each other in person. They met online at key stages of the semester and reflected on the effectiveness of the padlet in terms of allowing students to experience cultural learning as an integral part of applying international marketing theories.

One FHNW student commented: “I really appreciated the fact that we had the opportunity to interact with students from California. I learned from the American students to write my feedback in more detail, as they do.” Another said that the padlet exercise “added a lot of value to the concepts learned in class”.

A joint online board is a very effective, user-friendly tool to allow students to experience cultural similarities and differences. It also enabled the two lecturers to determine whether deeper cooperation and integration would be feasible in line with different methodologies and teaching styles.

#### EXAMPLE TWO: COMPUTER SIMULATION

Our second example, a COIL project between two lecturers from the FHNW and Sheridan College, Canada, focused on intercultural aspects of ethics, politics and individual responsibility towards society. Challenges in setting



up the COIL experience included different semester start times, different credit levels, different expectations of assessments and different teaching cultures. In an intense dialogue, solutions were found and many synergies were identified.

Students were introduced to the theories of ethics and cooperation. Both professors moderated online discussions in a full assembly and in small groups. One lecturer commented: “We both benefited from exchanging ideas on subject matter and didactics. We gave each other regular feedback. We were exposed to new material and to new expertise.”

## Binary thinking will not lead to finding solutions to the urgent environmental issues facing businesses and society

A computer simulation of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology’s Fishbanks game was conducted in mixed groups of Swiss and Canadian students. The simulation required decision-making in terms of profit and resource maximisation for fishers. Students created ecosystems and learned to map the stakeholders in an interconnected system in which the interests and relationships of each stakeholder were visible. The goal was to help students make decisions in complex environments and sensitise them to the fact that binary thinking will not lead to finding

solutions to the urgent environmental issues facing businesses and society.

### EXAMPLE THREE: A GRADUATE COURSE

Our final example is a COIL graduate course that forms part of a cooperation project called Promoting Gender Equality and Diversity through Shared Knowledge Production. The project is funded by the vice-chancellors’ group Swissuniversities and involves the University of Zurich, the University of Geneva, the FHNW and partners in the Middle East and North Africa.

The jointly conducted COIL graduate course, called Introduction to Transcultural Gender and Diversity Studies, aims to critically assess the different ways in which terminologies of gender and diversity, as well as related forms of expertise, are produced, translated, transferred and put into practice globally.

In the most recent course feedback, students said they appreciated the opportunity to share knowledge in this cooperative setting. The interdisciplinary approach of the course is challenging. It makes it clear from the beginning that different bodies of knowledge are being brought into the exchange, so the learning effect is considerable for both students and lecturers.

### COIL IS KEY

All of these COIL projects are currently being reviewed and, because of the positive experiences reported so far, are likely to resume in the coming autumn semester. The courses are mostly electives – students can choose to take them as

part of their wider programme of study – which gives the participating institutions more flexibility in scheduling and means that more students and faculty can get involved in international activities.

From now on, COIL practices are going to form an integral part of our international opportunities and enhance our portfolio. And although we do not expect them to quench students’ thirst for mobility, they do provide great opportunities to create beneficial international learning experiences for all students in a climate-friendly way.

Once they are set up, COIL projects can provide a sustainable way for students and lecturers to increase their knowledge, their international experience and their network without increasing their institutions’ carbon footprints.

—SUSAN GÖLDI, BARBARA THERESA MILLER, NIKOLINA FUDURIC, NATHALIE AMSTUTZ

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The background of the poster features a vibrant sky with soft clouds transitioning from blue to orange. In the foreground, there is a colorful mosaic wall with a large white star in the center. Overlaid on the sky are several abstract, organic shapes in blue, purple, and orange, connected by thin black lines.

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