

The promise and challenges of international student MVEs (multilateral virtual exchange programs)

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1. Introduction

2. Versatile - objectives

3. Key building blocks

4. MVEs - Promise

5. MVEs - Challenges

6. Conclusion

- Cooperation within the *The Hague Network* – a bottom up initiative, colleagues from 7 partner institutions:





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- Covid-19 pandemic forced higher education institutions to switch to online / hybrid teaching and internationalization activities were interrupted
- Quick response by the *The Hague Network* offering a virtual exchange by pooling course offers from partners of the network – offered first time in Fall semester 20/21
- Virtual program with diverse offering created many challenges for students, academics and administrators
- Special Erasmus call: KA226 - Partnerships for Digital Education Readiness used to try to tackle challenges



ERASMUS+ KA226 Strategic Partnership
2020-1-DE01-KA226-HE-005751
VERSATILE – Virtual Education Readiness Semester –
Adaptive Toolbox for an International Learning Experience

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VERSATILE Project: Virtual Education Readiness Semester – Adaptive Toolbox for an International Learning Experience



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Four project partners:

MASARYK
UNIVERSITY

 Tampere University
of Applied Sciences

 UNIVERSITY
of DERBY

 HOCHSCHULE
RHEIN-WAAL
Rhine-Waal University
of Applied Sciences



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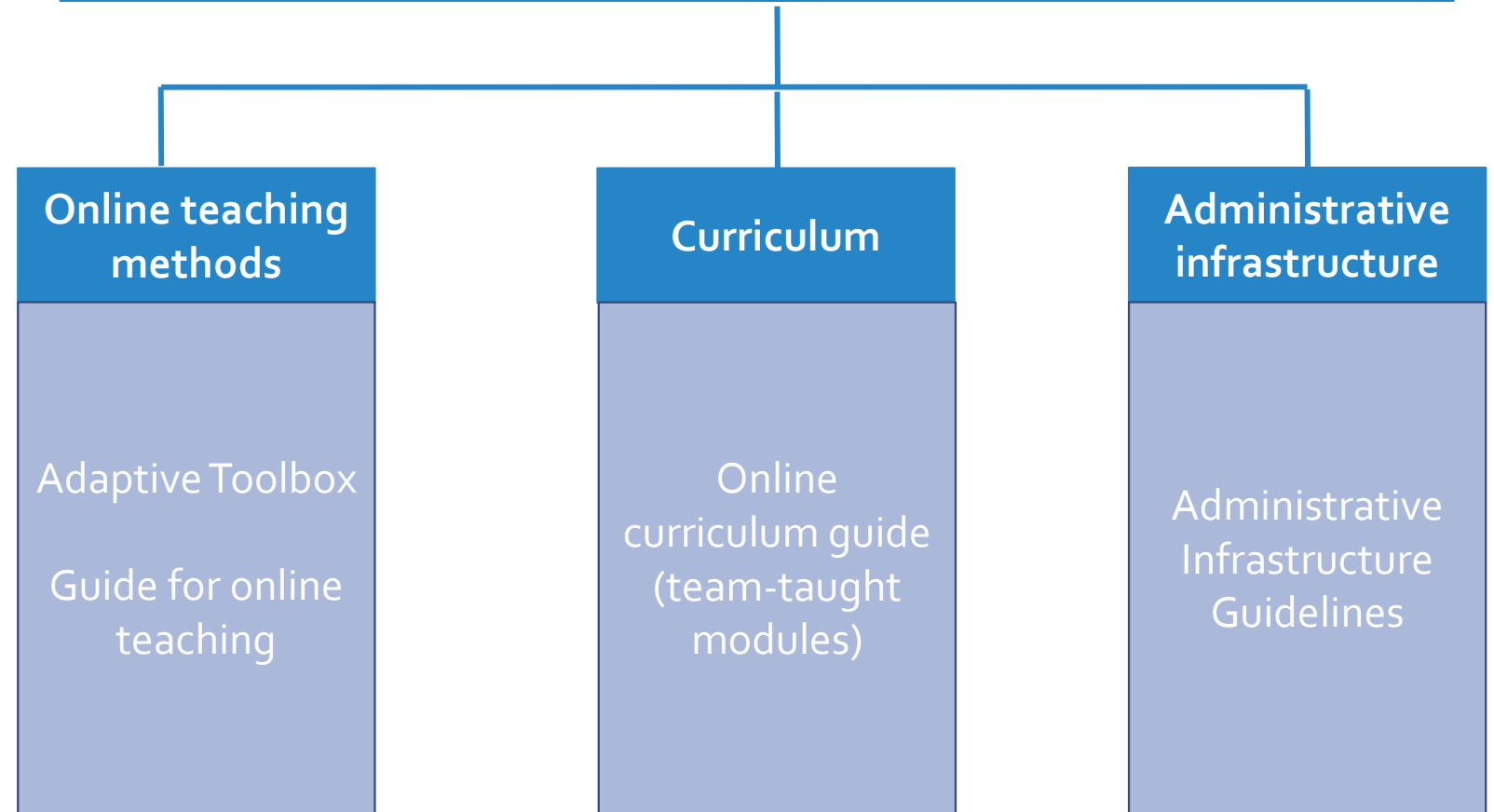
Four key objectives of VERSATILE:

1. To create viable alternatives to physical student mobility during the pandemic
2. Beyond the pandemic to enable higher education institutions to offer new I@H possibilities to students who face mobility barriers
3. To aid educators in developing their online teaching skills
4. To provide new ways in which educators can internationally exchange knowledge and methods



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Online Semester (Spring 2023) – 8 modules under umbrella theme (Business and Political Science)





Promise of MVEs – our experience

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Goes beyond short-term solution for pandemic to enhance I@H and support regular exchange:

- Low cost international experience for students facing financial barriers
- Attractive for international degree-seeking students - avoiding administrative burden of visa regulations; using mobility window for internship in country of study
- Appetiser for later physical mobility - lowers threshold
- Enabling students to develop online intercultural communication and teamwork skills - preparation for world of work
- Lowering carbon footprint
- Deeper collaboration between institutions – teachers, staff, students



Challenges of MVEs – our experience

Teaching:

- Matchmaking for team-teaching
- Challenges of international and online classroom
- Creating common terminology (related to subject and administration)
- Establishing common semester and timetable

Students:

- Reaching intended target groups
- Aligning incentives for active participation
- Challenges of intercultural teamwork online
- Working to tight deadlines due to timetable

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Challenges of MVEs – our experience

Administration and legal issues:

- IT support and online platforms
- Accreditation and transcript of records
- Enrolment in several institutions
- Compensation of teaching hours

Organisational issues:

- Communication between teams working on different building blocks
- Organisational matchmaking



Administrative Solutions

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- Agreed on data, certificates and qualifications
- Common registration platform for all institutions: MoveON
- Common learning platform for all course material and access to meeting platform: Digicampus
- Common Enrolment Guide for all students: Website
- Avoid administrative and tuition fees – agreed on exchange frame
- Learning agreement to ensure credit transfer



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Key take-aways

- Provides the building blocks of a **strategic device** for internationalization in higher education institutions
- Even post-pandemic, the **added value** of (M)VE is evident
- But times have changed – that **appetite** of students to complete a full virtual semester **has diminished**
- A **one-size fits-all solution** does not exist - institutions need to **plan early** when designing and implementing a curriculum and administrative setup
- **Even within European Union**, challenges of MVEs are many without a common legal framework



VERSATILE

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Adaptive **T**oolbox for an **I**nternational **L**earning **E**xperience

Thank you!

Questions?



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