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Internationalising groupwork: collaborative student projects with China and USA

Abstract:

The management of remote projects is challenging, especially for students who do not have the framework of a professional environment and a monthly salary for motivation. Adding an international dimension where team members are several time zones apart complicates the situation still further. Despite the difficulties, students from the School of Computing have taken part in successful remote collaborations with counterparts in China and the USA.

The structure and schedule of the projects were carefully designed to mitigate many of the problems of trust and engagement that remote collaborations typically suffer from. The main tactic was the inclusion of an intense face-to-face phase at the start of the project process. This allowed the students to develop the social capital required to carry them through the remote working phase.

While the challenges in the Chinese project revolved around language and culture, those in the American project were more to do with the communications among the student participants and the industry client.

This presentation reports on the experience of organising and supporting international projects and reflects on lessons learned. It provides some insights into the benefits for the participants, and evaluates the value of this type of activity for the University through comparison with the four strands of Strategy2020.