

Internationalising the curriculum through Erasmus intensive programmes

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Introduction

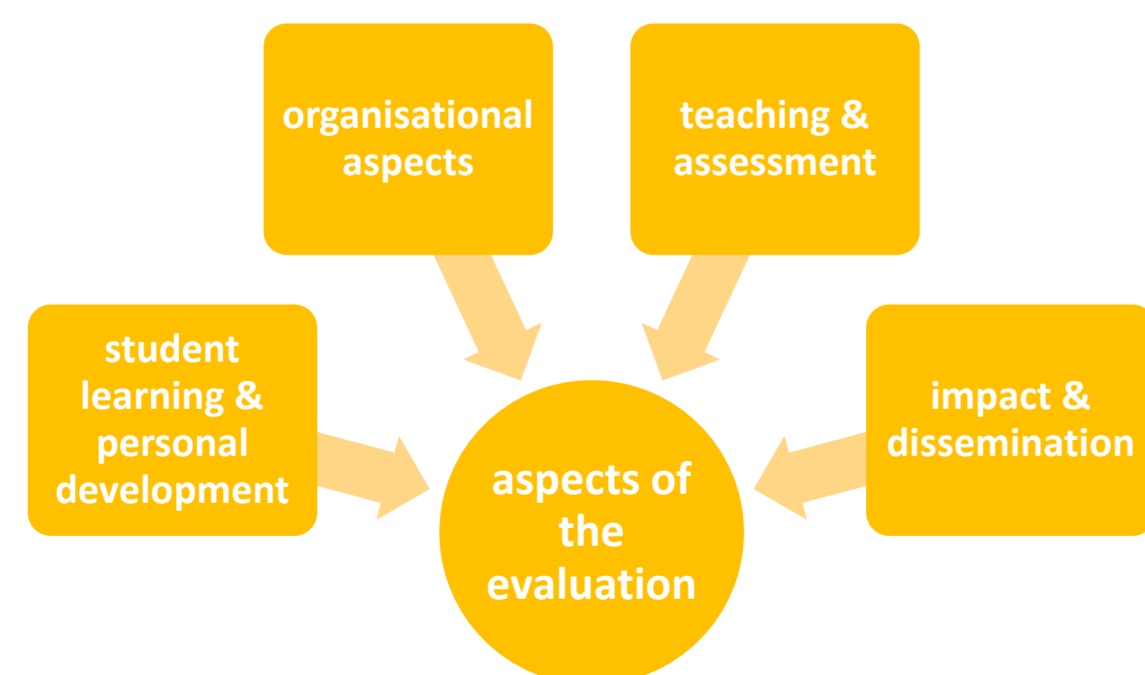
The Erasmus Intensive Programme (IP) “Innovative Use of Wood in Construction” was a partnership involving five countries, on the topic of timber construction. Students were recruited from different degree courses: architecture, civil engineering and product design.



Objectives

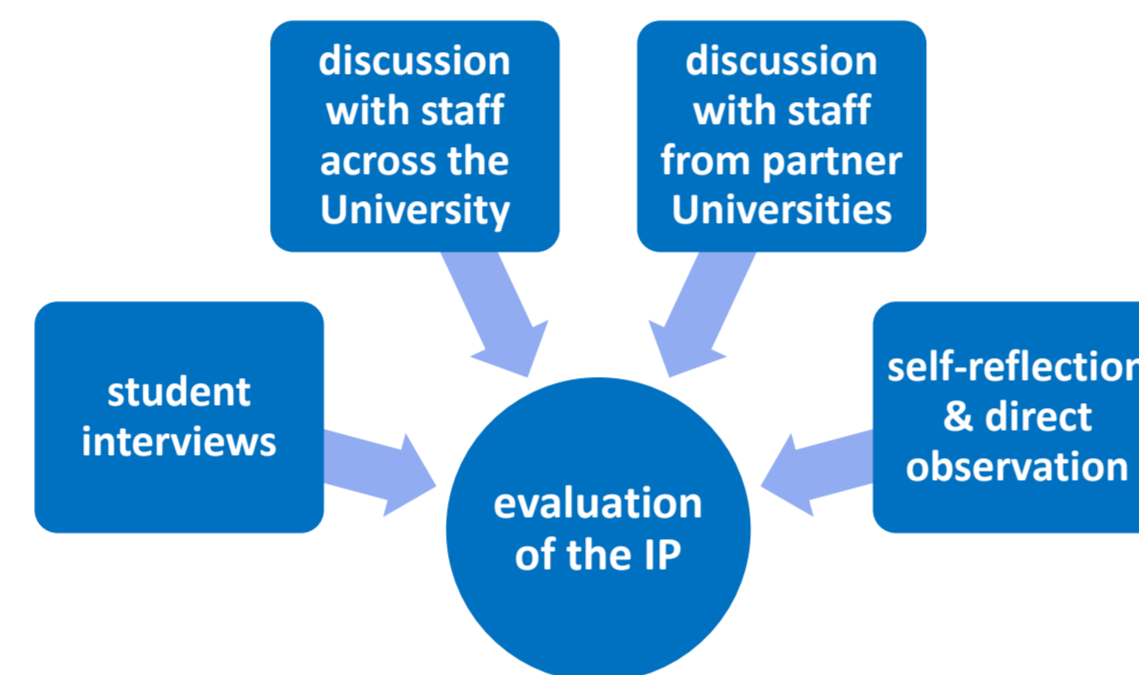
An evaluation of this Erasmus IP was carried out, which aimed to:

- provide insights into the student experience;
- evaluate the impact of the IP on the students’ education and cultural sensitivity;
- share experiences across ENU and identify common obstacles in the organisation of IPs;
- provide recommendations for future IPs.



Method

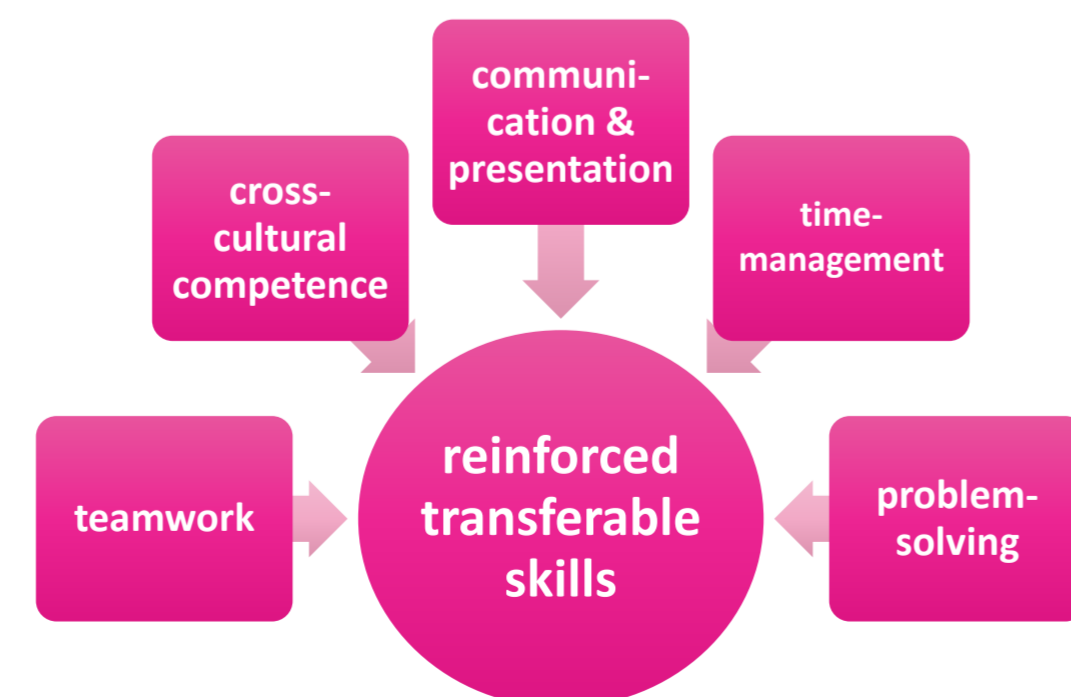
For each aspect of the IP to be evaluated, one or more methods were used:



Results

This specific IP benefited students, because:

- it strongly reinforced the participants’ capability to work in groups;
- it was an occasion for engineering students to interact with teachers and peers from other disciplines and backgrounds;
- it presented the learners with tasks very similar to the ones that engineers have to face in their practice;
- it improved several students’ transferable skills.



Intensive programmes offer great advantages in comparison with traditional, extended programmes:

- IPs are more attractive to students: they require to interrupt their routines only for a short time
- the language barrier is less strong
- they give not only students, but also teachers, the chance to spend a period of time abroad
- IPs provide for students to work in culturally-diverse groups

Intensive programmes can embrace several aspects of Edinburgh Napier’s International Strategy:

- international teaching and student exchanges
- the promotion of an element of overseas studies as an integral part of a degree course
- a curriculum with international content and international dimension within the learning experience

Recommendations

Some aspects of IPs can become critical to their success and need to be carefully considered:

- the procedure for the selection of students should be transparent, fair and inclusive
- IPs need to be fully integrated into the degree courses from which participants are recruited
 - to avoid overloading students
 - to minimise clashes with other activities
- IPs should always be academically recognised, bear credits (European Credit Transfer System) & include assessments
 - to facilitate students engagement and increase their learning
 - to be fair with students and acknowledge the effort they put into IPs
 - to prevent reputational problems for the University (credit recognition is monitored and pursued by the EU)

Future work

An investigation into the consequences of the new Erasmus Plus framework on the student learning experience and on the implementation of intensive programmes.