

# Assessing the level of internationalization of studies for working in a globalized world: which competences and what training?<sup>1</sup>

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## 1. Description of the experience

### 1.1 Foundation and backgrounds

The careers of university graduates will increasingly be developed in international environments. For this reason, the internationalization of higher education is a common aim worldwide and is being pursued from different models. Authors who follow the line of *Internationalization at Home (IaH)* understand internationalization as providing all students with intercultural and international competences in a global world (Beelen, 2007; Berardo, K. & Deardorff, D., 2012; Deardorff, D. K., Hans De Wit, M. J. & Adams, T., 2012; Leask & Bridge, 2013). In this context, the pilot plan to analyse and possibly increase the level of internationalization of university curricula, which is

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<sup>1</sup> The basis of this work was presented at the eighth International Conference on University Teaching and Innovation (CIDUI) (Tarragona, 2014).

being carried out on three undergraduate degrees of the URV (Spanish Language and Literature, Oenology/Biotechnology<sup>2</sup> and Infant Education), is in line with one of the aims of AQU (Catalan University Quality Assurance Agency), which is to increase the number of degrees accredited with the voluntary 'international' dimension<sup>3</sup>.

So far, universities have mainly concentrated on promoting the mobility of students, lecturers, researchers and administrative staff. At the moment, however, this type of mobility, though increasing, has reached only a limited percentage of students when the need for international training applies to all students. Working on *Internationalization at Home (IaH)* and, specifically, ensuring the internationalization of the curriculum involve meeting the challenge that academic curricula, in this case those of the URV, will be able to provide students with a comprehensive education that enables them to employ their professional competences in an intercultural way (Soria & Troisi, 2014).

In academic year 2012–2013, a group comprising internationalization staff and academic coordinators followed an online curriculum internationalization course offered by Columbus Association. Following the course, interest was generated in developing a pilot plan to increase the level of internationalization in the degree programmes mentioned above.

## 1.2 Aims

The aims of this project were:

1. To work across disciplines to find a curriculum internationalization model that can be applied to different degree programmes.
2. To define internationalization competences for URV graduates.
3. To analyse the existing competences of current degree programmes to assess the extent to which they cover the internationalization of graduates.
4. To find tools and establish procedures for objectively assessing the level of internationalization of URV undergraduate programmes.

## 1.3 Methodology and results

### 1.3.1 *The concept and competences of internationalization*

Of the various perspectives on internationalization, we have focused on the training and competences that must be acquired by graduates whose careers will increasingly

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<sup>2</sup> Initially, the participating programme was Oenology. In 2015-2016, Oenology stopped participating and was replaced by Biotechnology. The data shown in this paper belong to the first stage of the analysis and therefore correspond to the undergraduate programme in Oenology.

<sup>3</sup> Guide for the accreditation of official bachelor's and master's degrees. Version: 1.0. November 2013. AQU. Barcelona: B-28.219-2013. <[http://www.aqu.cat/doc/doc\\_79088268\\_1.pdf](http://www.aqu.cat/doc/doc_79088268_1.pdf)>.

be pursued in global environments characterized by interculturality and, therefore, by the demand for understanding multiple contexts and positions. From this perspective, Internationalization at Home (IaH), which has developed since the 1990s, interprets internationalization as providing all students with intercultural and international competences to help them become citizens and professionals in a globalized world (Beelen, 2007; Brandenburg & De Wit, 2011; Hudzik, 2011; Berardo, K. & Deardoff, D., 2012; Deardoff, D. K., De Wit, H. & Adams, T., 2012; Leask & Bridge, 2013). The objective is that ALL students should acquire these skills and consider themselves as internationalized, not only those who have the experience of mobility in another context and/or at another institution. Internationalization processes, to be considered as such, must be based on the perspectives of comprehensive understanding and action:

“Therefore, what we need are people who understand and define their role within a global community, transcending the national borders, and embracing the concepts of sustainability—equal rights and access, promoting education and research, and much more. But essentially, we need to reaffirm the core role of universities: to help understand this world and to improve the way we deal with it” (Brandenburg & De Wit, 2011:17).

This is because, according to the above authors, universities also have the inherent mandate to promote comprehensive development:

“...the ultimate mandate of a university is to make the world a better place through research, teaching, learning, innovation, and civic engagement.” (Brandenburg, 2011:19)

Hudzik, J. K. (2011:10) proposed the term ‘Comprehensive Internationalization’ to mean a commitment, confirmed by actions, to instil comparative and international perspectives into teaching, research and higher education services. Essentially, this should be considered an imperative for institutional leaders, teachers, students and academic and support services. In any case, moving away from naive and/or demonizing positions on internationalization involves constructing parameters for analysis (Brandenburg & De Wit, 2011; Lee, 2013).

We have selected several internationalization competences from the matrix of competences considered by several universities to be indicators of internationalization<sup>4</sup>. These competences were reviewed by four experts and/or institutions: AQU; M. Ángeles Caamaño (French Studies, URV); Jeanine Gregersen–Hermans (director of Student Recruitment, University of Hull, Yorkshire, UK); and Jos Beelen (Amsterdam

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<sup>4</sup> Work conducted in the context of the course ‘Implementing Internationalisation at Home. E-workshop’, proposed by the URV and organized by the Columbus Association in 2012-2013: <[http://www.columbus-web.org/images/admin/E-workshop%20IaH%20Columbus\(2\).pdf](http://www.columbus-web.org/images/admin/E-workshop%20IaH%20Columbus(2).pdf)>.

University of Applied Sciences). The basic ideas on which internationalization competences are based are:

1. They should include interculturality processes.
2. They should specify their composition with conceptual, procedural and attitudinal dimensions.
3. Reformulating or reinterpreting them should be a “bottom-up” process (recommendation by Jos Beelen). As we know, lists of competences do not ensure that those competences will be incorporated into the curriculum or that they will translate into real experiences for students, teachers and faculties, etc. unless they result from a convergence of those who must promote them and/or teach and learn them.
4. They should be specific and assessable even though their usual formulations tend everywhere to be abstract, even when produced by experts who demand such specificity. It is important to take on board this difficulty and plan opportunities to create them despite the complexity involved in evaluating them.

Our list of internationalization competences (incorporating the reviews of the four experts) is as follows:

#### CONCEPTS OR CONCEPTUAL KNOWLEDGE

##### Specific:

- ✦ Demonstrate understanding of the international dimension of the expertise required for their degree.
- ✦ Demonstrate understanding of the international dimension of the expertise required for the professions related to their degree (ethical aspects, competences, professional and working conditions, etc.).
- ✦ Demonstrate familiarity with the terminology of their discipline in English and/or other languages.

##### General:

- ✦ Demonstrate theoretical understanding of the processes of perception and cultural responsibility in human interactions.
- ✦ Reflect on the internationalization and how it affects their own professional position.

#### SKILLS and/or PROCEDURES

##### General:

- ✦ Act appropriately and effectively in different environments and work surroundings (limited by cultural diversity).
- ✦ Incorporate cultural diversity into their daily activities and professional behaviour.

## **SKILLS and/or PROCEDURES**

### **General:**

- Act appropriately and effectively in different environments and work surroundings (limited by cultural diversity).
- Incorporate cultural diversity into their daily activities and professional behaviour.

### **Communicative:**

- Communicate effectively in English and/or other languages.
- Understand scientific texts in English and other languages to solve professional problems and produce diagnoses in these languages.
- Communicate and defend an individual or group's position before a linguistically and culturally diverse audience.

### **Professional:**

- Use information from international sources to solve problems in their field.
- Put their professional practice into a global context and compare it with other contexts and countries.

### **ATTITUDES:**

- Be curious and open to other cultures, civilizations and experiences and willing to participate and learn in contexts of diversity.
- Be willing to participate and work positively with and for cultural, ethnic and linguistic diversity.

### **1.3.2 'Mapping' the internationalization competences in the three undergraduate programmes of the pilot plan**

The concepts of internationalization and interculturality were not explicitly considered among the key aspects of the URV's core curriculum for undergraduate degrees passed by the Governing Council on 21st February 2008. However, in the curriculums of the undergraduate programmes analysed in this project, we selected three competences that do include the aspects most directly related to internationalization (C5, C1 and B6):

C5. Be committed to ethics and social responsibility as citizens and professionals (core competence).

C1. Have an intermediate mastery of a foreign language, preferably English (core competence).

B6. Communicate information, ideas, problems and solutions clearly and effectively to a specific audience or in a particular technical environment (cross-disciplinary, or transversal, competence).

In this initial analysis, the URV's Educational Resources Service (SRE) offered their opinions and made several recommendations. One of the conclusions to be drawn is that the URV's map of competences should be extended to consider internationalization more explicitly, as indeed AQU is already doing.

Table 1 shows that these competences are already envisaged in the three undergraduate programmes (in ECTS units), though rather unevenly partly and, as expected, because the programmes are from different branches of knowledge. We have counted both the subjects that include these competences and the total number of ECTS credits they represent in undergraduate studies of 240 ECTS credits.

Competence B6 (communicative competence) has the greatest presence among the three undergraduate programmes in this project. This is followed by competence C5 (responsibility and citizenship) and finally competence C1, with a much lower presence. While Oenology leaves competence C1 for an optional subject, it is compulsory for the other two programmes. Spanish Language and Literature makes it obligatory to learn a second foreign language and optional to learn other foreign languages. To complete the Bachelor's Degree in Spanish Language and Literature, students must study English and one other foreign language (French or German). The URV did not assume the mandatory teaching of a foreign language. The presence of competences C5 and B6 in the obligatory subjects ensures that all students work to acquire them.

We consider that in Spanish Language and Literature the number of subjects (and, therefore, the number of credits) that evaluate these competences, is, in theory, sufficient. However, in an Arts and Humanities programme such as this one it would be logical for many more of its subjects to include specific competences of an international and intercultural nature, though this was not observed in this first analysis. This is in line with the recommendation to make these contents explicit in specific competences that would be more in line with current requirements.

With regard to Oenology, the core competences selected are mainly evaluated in the compulsory subjects and in the Degree Final Project. Cross-disciplinary competence B6 is the one that is evaluated in the most compulsory subjects (40% of the credits) as well as in one optional subject. Competence B6 is the most evaluated competence in this programme because it is inherently necessary to scientific training and does not necessarily involve interculturality.

Pre-School Education shows a good presence of C5 (the competence most specific to interculturality) in its compulsory subjects (46%), a high presence of competence B6 (70%) and a lower presence of competence C1 (26%). The low presence of competence C1 is compensated for in the optional subjects for this

programme, which includes specific mentions of foreign languages and diversity, for which internationalization and interculturality are central.

**Table 1. Number of subjects (in total ECTS) that include the indicated competences by undergraduate programme.**

DEGREES		Competences		
		B6	C1	C5
INFANT EDUCATION	Compulsory	168	63	111
	Optional	63	18	33
SPANISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE	Compulsory	24	24	24
	Optional	12	12	0
OENOLOGY	Compulsory	101	0	29
	Optional	3	3	0

### *1.3.3 Characterization of good internationalization practices*

Overall, what actions should an internationalized curriculum perform with regard to curriculum planning and management, methodology and encouraging students, teachers and the educational community? This is another question that must be answered before assessing the level of internationalization of the degree programmes analysed in this project. We based our analysis of the perception of the level of internationalization on the document prepared by teachers Michelle Baker, Elisha Frederiks and Brona Farrelly<sup>5</sup> on conducting online surveys for academic coordinators and lecturers of degree programmes. In a later analysis, the opinions of students in their final years of their degrees were included in order to extend the range of opinions available.

The surveys included questions on course content and design, the teaching-learning processes, evaluation processes, resources, tools, teaching materials and extracurricular activities. In annex 1 we provide the teachers' questionnaire as an example.

In academic year 2013-2014, in addition to that of the three academic coordinators, the participation of the course lecturers was also significant (roughly 75% for Spanish Language and Literature and 100% for Pre-School Education). Also, 40% of fourth-year students participated in the survey, while 68% of third- and fourth-year students studying Infant Education did so.

<sup>5</sup> GIHE, Good Practice Resource Booklet on Internationalisation of the Curriculum <[http://www.griffith.edu.au/\\_\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0011/186905/IoC\\_Course-level.pdf](http://www.griffith.edu.au/___data/assets/pdf_file/0011/186905/IoC_Course-level.pdf)>.

The teachers' questionnaire comprised 29 questions, which were preceded by several descriptive questions on their subject (name, year taught, type of subject, and number of students) and followed by a final open question.

There were two types of possible answers:

- A score of 1 to 4 for their level of agreement with the question with regard to their subject (as coordinators and/or teachers)
- A suggestion that the question does not apply to their subject ('not applicable') and the option not to answer (Don't know/no comment).

Of the multiple possible analyses, the one incorporating the answers obtained on the three undergraduate programmes is particularly interesting for assessing the validity of this survey for evaluating their degree of internationalization. Moreover, each academic coordinator had to identify, for their undergraduate programme, which aspects they considered had already been sufficiently attained and for which ones they considered improvements could be made with regard to internationalization. Figure 1 shows which aspects the teaching faculty considered had most been attained.

Figure 1. Percentage of positive scores achieved on each question of the teachers' questionnaire, by undergraduate programme.

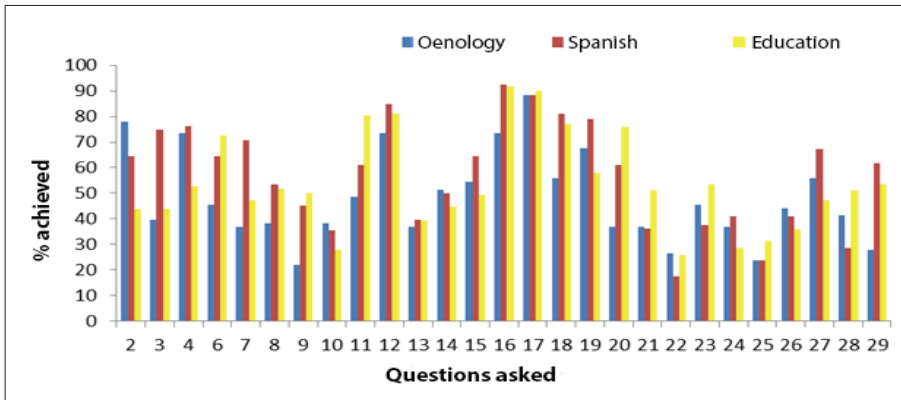


Table 2 shows which aspects the coordinators and lecturers of the three undergraduate programmes considered had already been more than 60% attained.

	Attained > 60%	Opportunity
Oenology	2, 4, 12, 16, 17, 18	4,90
Spanish Language and Lit.	2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 11, 12, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 61, 27, 29	8,53
Pre-School Education	6, 11, 12, 16, 17, 18, 20	2,04



Table 2 shows that 7 aspects are considered to be attained to a high degree (over 60%): three of these are common to two of the undergraduate programmes (questions 2, 4 and 11) and four of them are common to all three undergraduate programmes (questions 12, 16, 17 and 18).

2. In which degree does the bibliography you work with include international references?

4. Does the subject take into account the international context of the discipline or career?

11. Does the subject contemplate the combined use of formats, resources and face-to-face, blended and online methodologies to guarantee equal opportunities for all types of students?

12. Are the bibliography and materials employed adequate for students with heterogeneous language and culture?

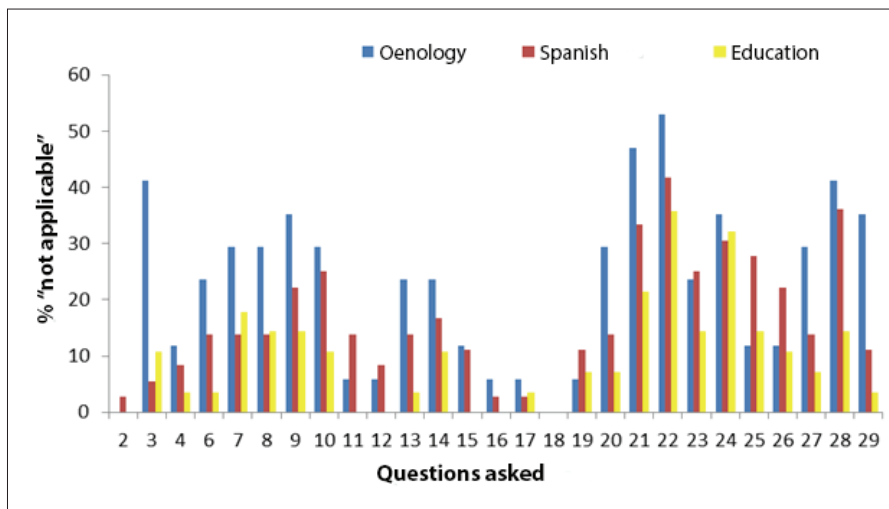
16. Do you speak and pronounce carefully and at an appropriate speed so that your students understand what you are saying perfectly?

17. Do you present the information or contents using a wide range of media (oral presentations, audio-visual aids, photocopies, etc.)?

18. Do you ask your students to name the key concepts or to summarise the main ideas of your explanations to ensure they have understood you?

The coincidence between the three undergraduate programmes points to specific methodological contents. Respondents from Oenology and Spanish Language and Literature coincided in their perception that the general questions on internationalization were more than sufficiently covered, while this perception was lower in respondents from Infant Education. Figure 2 illustrates the opinions of the respondents on the extent to which the items were applicable to their subjects.

Figure 2. Percentage of respondents who considered that the questions indicated were not applicable to their subject, by undergraduate programme.



Analysis of this figure leads to table 3.

Table 3 shows which aspects the coordinators and lecturers of the three undergraduate programmes considered had been less than 40% attained and those for which the question is considered not applicable for more than 40% of the subjects.

	% achieved < 40	% not applicable > 40
Oenology	9,13,20,21,22,24,25,29	21,22
Spanish Language & Lit.	10,21,22,25,28	22 (40%)
Infant Education	10,22,24,25,26	22 (35%)

We can see that the topics raised in questions 22 and 25 are considered to have been attained to a very low extent in all three degrees (<40%). The topics raised in questions 10, 21 and 24 are also considered not to have been fully attained in at least two degrees.

22. Does the subject foster collaboration with local organizations that work on international or national projects with an international or global projection?

25. Do you encourage your students to create an e-portfolio that reflects their intercultural skills and global conscience?

10. Do you encourage your students to communicate by electronic media with people in other countries (students or professionals) working in the same field to analyse related topics?

**21. Do students' research projects require them to compare local and international professional practices?**

**24. Do you take into account students' proposals when designing assessment criteria with the subject's international goals in mind?**

We can clearly see that question 22 was considered not appropriate in almost all cases. We can conclude that this item should be removed or at least included in a different section from the global analysis, given the characteristics of the undergraduate programmes but also of the type of university, which differs greatly in certain aspects from the universities for which the questionnaire was intended. On the other hand, some questions on the language used in the programme should be added in order to reflect the programme's linguistic diversity, which is an important aspect that is not covered in the questionnaire.

When we compare the responses of the lecturers with those of the academic coordinators for each undergraduate programme, we find there is strong agreement on matters that are common to both groups, though there are also some discrepancies.

With regard to the degree in Spanish Language and Literature, it is important to make a distinction between the level of internationalization and the level of interculturality. Both the academic coordinator and the lecturers surveyed consider internationalization to be important but point out that the specialisation of some subjects make these aspects difficult to evaluate. On the matter of interculturality, Spanish Language and Literature is a programme in which interculturality is widely present – in fact, some of the subjects taught analyse that very dimension in art and literature. Sometimes, however, it is present in a rather more subtle way. The perception of the fourth-year students regarding the levels of internationalization and interculturality does not differ significantly from those of the academic coordinator or lecturers: only the answers to questions 13, 14, 15 and 22 show significant differences. As could be expected from the nature of the programme, the branch of knowledge to which it belongs, and the intention with which the programme was designed, we can deduce from the questionnaires that this undergraduate programme has more strengths than weaknesses when it comes to internationalization and interculturality.

With regard to the degree in Oenology, the general questions (questions 2–10) present an acceptable level of attainment and do not present great differences between lecturers and academic coordinators, especially those for which the level of attainment is high. The areas in which most internalization effort is concentrated are the subject contents and the teaching materials. Most bibliographical references are from international sources and these are considered suitable for a group of students that is heterogeneous in both language and culture. International students contribute their experience and knowledge, which are used in class by the lecturer to take into account

other points of view especially in subjects specifically concerned with oenological contents. Interculturality is not so apparent. The academic coordinator confirms these results, adding that the programme also deals with topics such as quality and sustainability, both of which are important in a globalized world.

With regard to Infant Education, the high response from third- and fourth-year students (68%) means we can compare the perceptions of the lecturers, students and academic coordinator. Generally, there is strong agreement between these three groups. The responses to the general questions indicate a low and/or dispersed perception between the groups both in terms of internationalization and interculturality, unlike the clear perception of the presence of ethical content. The level of interaction and intercultural collaboration could be increased. With regard to teaching internships and evaluation procedures, which one would expect to respect interculturality and to promote equal opportunities for all types of students, it appears that the students do not perceive them in this way. Also, both students and lecturers have a relatively low perception of the incentives available for stimulating mobility, internships in different communities or participation in extracurricular multicultural events.

## 2. Conclusions

If we begin with the premise that the international and intercultural competences students need to acquire require their understanding of the complexities of global problems and international perspectives in several fields, the ability to apply knowledge of their discipline in a global context, and the ability to work with people from other cultures and to appreciate and understand ethnical and cultural diversity, it is first necessary to share both the conceptual framework on which it is based and the corpus of specific skills that *Internationalization at Home (IaH)* considers make up this profile, and to organise the curriculum in order to achieve it. The proposal we began with to analyse an internationalized curriculum seems to us to be a good tool.

We consider the interdisciplinary approach implemented in this project to be valid for obtaining both the conceptual framework and the tools needed to evaluate whether graduates have the level of training they need to work in a globalised world. There is much international agreement that providing students with an internationalizing and employable curriculum is also to provide them with intercultural competences and the competences that will prepare them to become global citizens with local links and responsibilities.

Which is the level of internationalization of the three undergraduate programmes analysed? If we analyse the lists of competences, we can conclude that the aspects of internationalization covered by competences B6 and C5 are assured

in all three programmes, while those covered by competence C1 may present some shortcomings, even though the new Catalan regulations are intending to soon set the requirement that all graduates must reach B2 level in a foreign language (Budgetary Law, autonomous government of Catalonia, 2014). It is also important to identify which aspects of the competences should again be incorporated into the curriculums.

We also conclude that the questionnaire can also be used to analyse the degree of *comprehensive internationalization* (Hudzik, 2011) of these undergraduate programmes if we remove or relocate questions 10, 21, 22, 24 and 25, keep the other items and maintain the same structure. The questionnaire indicates on which aspects greater effort should be made in each programme. Once corrected, it could become a valuable tool for generalising internationalization though, obviously, its validity would need to be tested on larger groups.

The opinions of the teaching staff, academic coordinators and students expressed in the self-diagnosis suggest the need for educational, curricular and organisational training activities that include promoting greater awareness of the spheres of comprehensive internationalization among the three groups and incorporate methods for increasing interaction and experiences of interculturality.

The development of intercultural competence may require a more comprehensive approach. Some models of intercultural development, such as Deardorff's (2009), suggest that the development of this competence begins with the fundamental attitudes of respect, openness and curiosity, which lead to adaptability and flexibility in different cultural contexts and ultimately to appropriate communication and behaviour in intercultural situations.

### **3. Subsequent and current actions**

In 2014-2015 and 2015-2016, the actions and analyses outlined in this project continued to evolve in, for example, the following areas:

- ✦ More students have completed the questionnaire in order to broaden the base for data collection. For this reason, the Oenology undergraduate programme was replaced by the Biotechnology programme.
- ✦ Comparison of the opinions of lecturers and students led us to begin designing a definitive questionnaire than can be used for other academic programmes.
- ✦ We have started to return the results of the questionnaires to the lecturers and students of Infant Education, who are now taking decisions based on these results and our proposals.

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## **Annex 1. Teachers' questionnaire**

1. Does the subject include results on international and/or intercultural learning?
2. To what extent does the bibliography you work with include international references?
3. Does the subject require students to analyse or compare cases and examples of an international or global nature or examples related to other countries?
4. Does the subject take into account the international context of the discipline or profession?
5. Does the subject promote knowledge of foreign languages and/or cultural diversity?
6. Does the subject deal with ethical topics and issues from the perspective of a globalised world?
7. Does the subject facilitate or promote the relationship between students of different origins, cultures and educations?
8. Does the subject include collaborative activities (workshops, roundtables, debates and seminars) that foster international and multicultural awareness?
9. Do you promote the formation of culturally diverse groups when doing teamwork?
10. Do you encourage your students to communicate by electronic media with people in other countries (students or professionals) working in the same field to analyse related topics?
11. Does the subject contemplate the combined use of formats, resources and face-to-face, blended and e-learning methodologies to guarantee equal opportunities for all types of students?
12. Are the bibliography and materials used adequate for students with heterogeneous language and culture?
13. Are speakers and/or lecturers of diverse origin, culture and profession invited to present?
14. Have members of different origin or ethnic groups (national or international) participated in the materials you use?
15. Do you use the experience and knowledge of international or culturally diverse students as an educational resource (e.g. to learn relevant aspects of the subject in other countries, to take into account other points of view, etc.)?
16. Do you speak and pronounce carefully and at the appropriate pace so that your students understand what you are saying?
17. Do you present your information or contents using a wide range of media (oral presentations, audio-visual aids, photocopies, etc.)?

18. Do you ask your students to name the key concepts or to summarise the main ideas of your explanations to ensure they have understood you?
19. Do you take into account that sense of humour and other linguistic registers (e.g. colloquial) can be difficult to understand due to their cultural specificity?
20. Do you combine the evaluation of different types of individual and group assignments in order to evaluate the ability of your students to work in global (multilingual/multicultural) environments?
21. Do students' research projects require them to compare local and international professional practices?
22. Does the subject foster collaboration with local organizations that work on international or national projects with an international or global projection?
23. Do you promote assessment between students, and between students and external experts?
24. Do you take into account students' proposals when designing assessment criteria with the subject's international goals in mind?
25. Do you encourage your students to create an e-portfolio that reflects their intercultural skills and their global conscience?
26. Do you encourage your students to join international associations/organizations related to their profession/field of studies?
27. Do you promote international study, practice or cooperation stays for your students?
28. Do you promote interaction with diverse communities during internships or any other type of out-of-campus activities?
29. Do you promote students' participation in extracurricular multicultural events?
30. Please write here any comments you would like to make regarding the questions or any topic related to them.