

URV International Virtual Campus: development of competences via the virtual internationalization of education.

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Background

The internationalisation of higher education is inevitable (Fischer, 2010). National and international bodies are creating and analysing policies to determine what the best strategies are. Companies are increasingly operating in more globalised environments¹. However, very few universities are able to offer an international curriculum and prepare future professionals to work in these international environments.

Article 11.b of UNESCO's Universal Declaration on *Higher Education, Higher Education in the Twenty-First Century: Vision and Action*, states that:

Quality also requires that higher education should be characterized by its international dimension: exchange of knowledge, interactive networking, **mobility of teachers and students**, and international research projects, while taking into account the national cultural values and circumstances.

The positive effects on education provided by student mobility programmes are undeniable². In addition to gaining access to similar or complementary knowledge to the knowledge available at their home university³, the main advantages of this kind of

1 For example, the American company General Electric already generates more than 50% of its results outside the United States. Also, 115,000 of IBM's 400,000 employees work in the United States but more than that figure work in India. Another example is the Dutch company Royal Dutch Shell, which has moved its headquarters to London (Doh, 2010).

2 More than 143,794 students took advantage of the Erasmus European mobility programme in 2008/2009. Of these, 24,399 were Spanish (Eurostat, 2008). The same programme enabled 18,476 teaching staff members to conduct some form of mobility action (Eurostat, 2003).

3 EU students' average rating on the academic aspects is positive or very positive in 91% of cases, while negative or very negative in only 9% of cases (COM, 2000:30).

exchange for students are the mastery they acquire of other languages and the personal experience they gain from taking a course in a country and a language that are not their own.

These are the values that are increasingly required by companies that operate in globalised markets. However, higher education today has become an attractive market in which more and more entities besides universities are intervening. We therefore believe it is fundamental to define the internationalisation model by following the approach of Scandinavian countries, which give priority to social and cohesive aspects over the commercial exploitation of higher education.

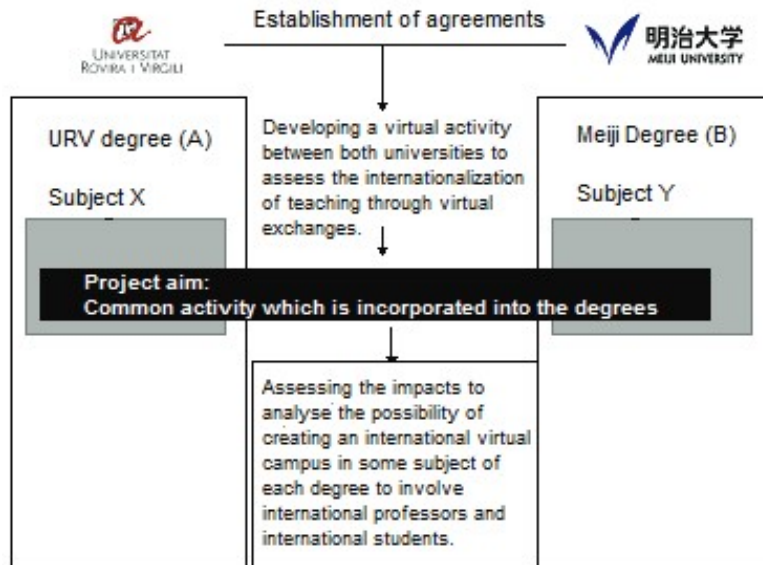
While **new technologies** are facilitating and transforming teaching and research processes, so far they have barely been used to promote student international mobility. To exploit the potential of technology, UNESCO (1998a, 1998b) recommended creating networks, carrying out technology transfers, training human resources, developing didactic materials, and exchanging experiences gained as a result of applying these technologies to teaching, training and research in order to enable everybody to gain access to knowledge. It also stressed the need to create new learning environments, ranging from distance education services to virtual systems of higher education that could shorten distances and establish high-quality educational systems, thus promoting social and economic progress and the democratization of higher education.

These **virtual university campuses** can facilitate the **mobility of students and lecturers** without **socioeconomic aspects** determining access to virtual exchange programmes. The creation of new activities and subjects in which students from different countries share the same lecturer, complete group projects, meet online via messaging or videoconferencing systems, are obliged to use other languages, and work with cultural and legislative differences and different means, etc. will, in some way, encourage all students, regardless of their income level and socioeconomic situation, to use third languages and learn how to work in multicultural international environments.

Moreover, since the cost of virtual mobility does not depend on the distances involved, this type of mobility enables universities from outside Europe to participate. Using virtual campuses will allow global exchange projects to be undertaken beyond the EU. The aim of this project is to analyse the feasibility of promoting the use of the virtual campus to foster international educational exchanges at the URV.

Description

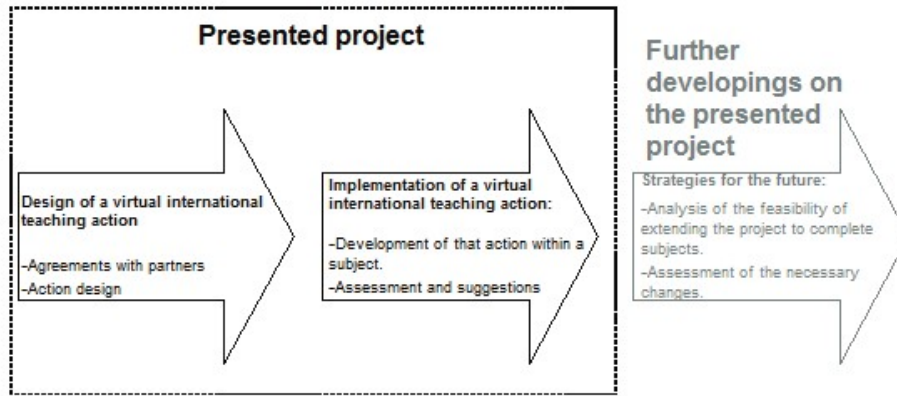
The project is summarised in the following graphic:



The nature of the project is interdepartmental, inter-university, international and interdisciplinary:

- ✦ Interdepartmental: Lecturers from various URV departments who are interested in innovation and teaching quality will form a team to carry out the project. The departments will belong to numerous URV schools and faculties in order to find the cross fertility needed for a project of this nature.
- ✦ Inter-university: The team will include experts from other national and international universities.
- ✦ International: The international perspective is the core strategy for this project.
- ✦ Interdisciplinary: Interdisciplinary knowledge will be encouraged in the participations of both students and teaching staff.

The development of the project is as follows:



The agreement with Meiji University was signed on 17th November 2012. Before the signing of the agreement, however, and in collaboration with Dr Murata, director of the Centre for Business Information Ethics and professor at the School of Commerce of that University, we had already begun designing the activity to determine the maximum workload possible, the distribution of the subjects (compulsory or voluntary), evaluation procedures, technologies, schedules, etc. In October 2013 we held the first edition of a virtual seminar entitled “Working in the Knowledge Society”, which was designed to encourage and analyse the use of virtual campuses as a form of virtual student mobility. The aims of this seminar were two-fold: the acquisition of knowledge and the development of the skills needed to work in international, interdisciplinary environments. Most of the activities at the seminar were conducted in groups.

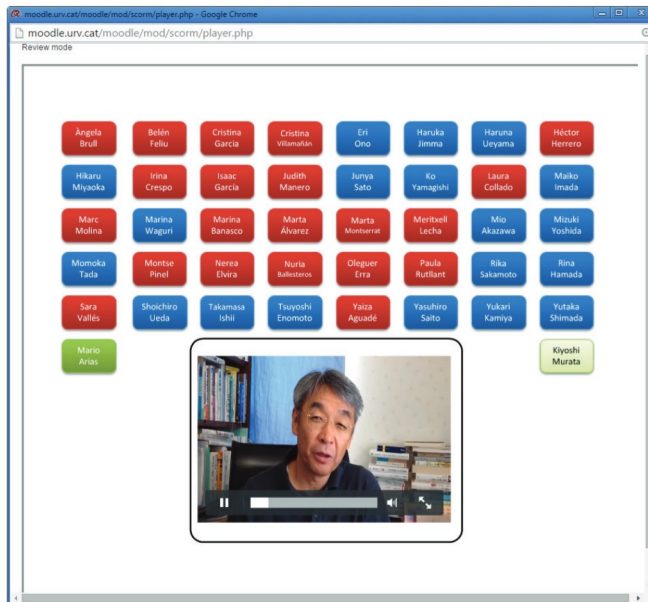
The internationalization of education has helped students to develop all types of competences (specific, transversal and core). However, emphasis has been placed on the transversal and core skills, since these can be exported to any degree, while specific competences depend on the degree concerned. Even so, the impact of internationalization on specific competences can also be considerable.

Core competences		
C1	Have an intermediate mastery of a foreign language, preferably English.	As the project has been developed entirely in English, it will improve student competence in a third language.
C2	Be advanced users of information and communication technologies.	The project is developed entirely through the intensive use of ICT. Students will use all Web 2.0 technologies in a practical way and apply them to their professional skills development.
C3	Be able to manage information and knowledge.	As the amount of information available in the international virtual environment is greater than is available in local, physical environments, the project will help students learn to manage information and knowledge.
C4	Be able to express themselves correctly both orally and in writing in one of the two official languages of the URV.	NO IMPACT: the official URV languages are not used in this project.
C5	Be committed to ethics and social responsibility as citizens and professionals.	The international perspective of the problems faced will help students to expand their ethical and professional standpoints by observing standards of ethical and professional behaviours in other countries.
C6	Be able to define and develop their academic and professional project.	Working in an international environment will enable students to discover new opportunities for internationalizing their studies and to define and develop their academic and professional project from this wider perspective.

The following activities were conducted at the seminar:

[Task #1: The videoletter]

The seminar began with teachers and students introducing themselves in a videoletter. As we were working in a virtual environment, creating the conditions necessary for teamwork was fundamental to the success of the seminar. Below we present an example of this activity:



The videoletters of the students were prepared for use on any device with html5 technology – Smartphone (iPhone, Android or Windows), Tablet (iPad, Android or Surface) and PC (Linux, Windows, Mac) – and shared on the virtual campus.

[Task #2: Teambuilding]

The aim of the second activity was to form the teams, find ways of establishing channels of communication between team members, and enable team members to get to know each other better so that later activities would be more cohesive and have their coordination mechanisms up and running.

The following criteria were applied when setting up the teams:


- *University*: we tried to ensure that 50% of the members of each team were from the URV and 50% were from Meiji University.
- *Gender*: we attempted to ensure that 50% of the members of each team were men and 50% were women.
- *Team size*: we considered the ideal size to be four members though, depending on the circumstances, the size could reach a maximum of six.

As an example, below we present the composition of the teams for one of the three seminars:


Name	University	Team Number
Naoyuki	Meiji	1
Atsushi	Meiji	1
Laura	Rovira	1
Alba	Rovira	1
Tatsuya	Meiji	2
Kohei	Meiji	2
Hèctor	Rovira	2
Miriam	Rovira	2
Yurika	Meiji	3
Keiichiro	Meiji	3
Alba	Rovira	3
Glòria	Rovira	3
Yusuke	Meiji	4
Ren	Meiji	4
José Carlos	Rovira	4
Marta	Rovira	4
Kaoru	Meiji	5
Christopher	Meiji	5
Raquel	Rovira	5
Alba	Rovira	5

Nom	Universitat	Nombre d'equip
Takamasa	Meiji	6
Youhei	Meiji	6
Marina	Rovira	6
Elena	Rovira	6
Hiroki	Meiji	7
Teruaki	Meiji	7
Andreia	Rovira	7
Thays	Rovira	7
Kohei	Meiji	8
Aina	Rovira	8

Once the teaching staff had set up the teams, the students were informed via the virtual campus (Moodle):



Task 2
by ARIAS OLIVA MARIO - dilluns, 30 març 2015, 10:39 AM

 Task 2 Teambuilding.pdf

Dear students, hello again!

Our next task is teambuilding. You can find in moodle a pdf file with all instructions, and I attach as well in this email.

First of all, we will inform you about your teammates:

- Meritxell Lecha, lecha.meritxell@gmail.com
- Montse Pinel, montse.pinel@hotmail.com
- Héctor Herrero, hector.h.c.sound@gmail.com
- Rina Hamada, kb11196hamada@gmail.com
- Yutaka Shimada, c07102_shimada_y@cs.cpm.ehime-u.ac.jp

We do recommend you to introduce yourself a little bit more in order to build nice working environment. We have created a new forum called "Specific Teamwork Forum (#2 Teambuilding)".

All that your messages posted in this forum will be recorded and able to access for all the members of the group. Please, use it in order to develop the Task #2.

Moreover, in this specific teamwork forum, only the team members will be allowed to write and read (members of other groups will not be able to access in this Private Forum)

Prof. Murata, Prof. Arias, Angela Brull

[Edit](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#) | [Export to portfolio](#)

As mentioned earlier, to encourage the students to begin interacting on a simple activity and work in global, international and interdisciplinary environments, the first activity was to choose a name for the team. This obliged students to establish appropriate channels of communication, exchange information about themselves (phone number, e-mail address, Skype username, Facebook username, etc.) and to

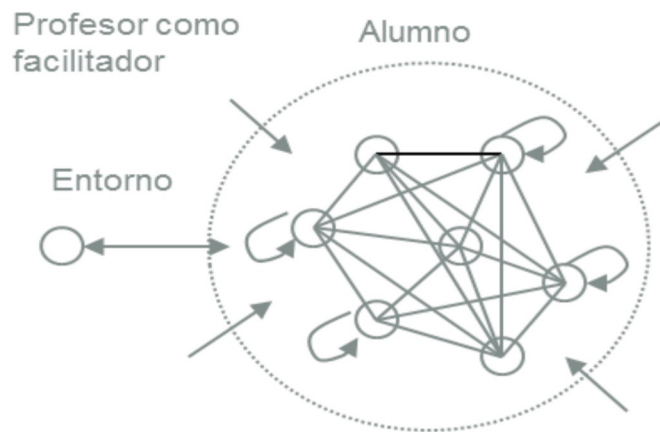
create the necessary collaboration mechanisms (Google Drive, Dropbox, etc.). To do so, as well as receiving the names and e-mail addresses of their teammates, they were provided instructions and basic recommendations to carry out this simple activity.

[Task #3: The environment]

Once the teams were created and the seminar had begun with a simple task, we increased the level of difficulty by introducing concepts related to the topic of the seminar. The proposed methodology was based on two fundamental axes:

1. A teaching methodology that would foster the student's active participation.
2. The aims of the programme and adjustment of the Teaching-Learning method.

Under the approach we adopted (which was humanistic or socio-cultural), rather than providing an interpretation of the facts, the teacher encouraged the students to provide their own interpretation (taking into account their cultural bias) and stimulated the creation of knowledge through cooperation and analysis of the environment (see figure below):



With this methodology, the students discovered the new environment of the knowledge society gradually and collaboratively. The activity was based on first analysing the local environment and then the global, technological environment by examining pictures taken by the students themselves.

Below we show several examples of the tasks conducted in this activity:



International Seminar: Working in Knowledge Society



Team Number:

2

Miriam



Hèctor



Tatsuya



Kohei



TRYN



International Seminar: Working in Knowledge Society



Shinjuku

Shinjuku is the largest business city in Japan. In Shinjuku, a lot of companies are doing economic activities day-to-day. Total sales in large department stores earned more than 1 trillion yen. The number of users per day of Shinjuku Station is 3.44 million people, which is a Guinness world record.



Your city/region (Rovira)

"ELS CASTELLERS"

It's an amusing experience watch the "*Els Castellers*" (human castles) practice. Basically, it's a Catalanian tradition a couple of hundred years old. It's represent pretty well the sprit of team work...



Your university (Meiji)

LIBERTY TOWER

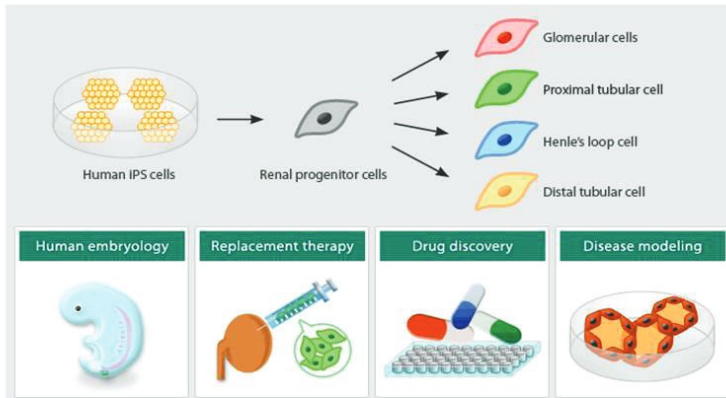
This photo is the most representative buildings of the Meiji University. It is named "Liberty Tower". The tower consisting of 23 stories above ground and 3 below.



Universitat Rovira i Virgili (Rovira)

Hèctor searching in the library of the URV

We think that the library is the most representative place of URV because it represents “knowledge”, order , intelect and the answers of all. Every day we visit the library to search, to study... It is the source of information.



Technological Society (Meiji & Rovira)

iPS cells

Professor Yamanaka in Kyoto university has been awarded with the novel-physiology- prize by inventing the iPS cells. This is the cell that can transform another cells in the body. The iPS cells help us in this global overpopulation.



Global k-Society (Meiji & Rovira)

Google

Search the world's information, including webpages, images, videos and more. Google has many special features to help you find exactly what you're looking for.



Technological Society (Meiji & Rovira)

Connections online

We are managed by ourselves with various data such as characters, photos, movies etc. The innovation of technology improve the way to connect beyond the border all over the world and we are committing to built a better virtual society.



A representative photo of the most important economic sector in Tokyo

Keio University Hospital

Actually, I choose this photo as one example of medical treatment and welfare that are the most important economic sector in Tokyo because this hospital is the largest one in Tokyo. The reason why I select this is that old people are increasing and it become a social problem in not only Tokyo but also whole Japan. Medical treatment and welfare sector is being required to tackle this big issue well.

[Task #4: Working in the knowledge society]

The fourth task was based on the study of two articles from the McKinsey Quarterly journal on the knowledge society. After reading the articles individually, the students were asked to discuss them with their group, reach an agreement, and draft a document outlining their conclusions.

Below is an example of this activity:

TRYN (TEAM 5)
Miriam
Hèctor
Tsuya
Name

The present situation of Spain and Japan in K-society

About the reading the evolution of work, We agree with Rebecca Ranninger that now more and more the employees are working remotely. And that's normal because technology evolution. We think that it's good, so it gives people a lot more flexibility and freedom because they chose when and where they work and that's make them happier about the job. But for example in Spain that's more complicated to implant that system of work because the important thing is that you must stay in your workplace "x" hours, doesn't matter if you are efficient or not. That's a problem and is very difficult to change the mindset of managers. This is in general, it's true that there are companies that use this system of work and is a breakthrough.

We agree with her because perhaps some people don't be able to separate the different elements of our lives as we used to, because probably you are at home and you must work there. Also it's difficult to know if the employers are maintaining our company culture and values.

Anyway and leaving the problems we think is possible and also efficient, but that must be controlled, for example if the employer do well the work, if they have problems, if they are happy with the work...

If we implant this wonderful system, we must meet another colleague in company's office to unite our ideas once a week at minimum or some problems is occurred for no communication. In Japan, they apt to act something by watching another people. They often care what people acting. Example: What do they do? Where do they? What do they like? So, they work in office with colleagues in office. They make business truth for this custom. We think it is also difficult for Japan to implant this system. We must think about this problem to work in this system.

Following the opinion of my colleagues, we believe that this working model is the way to go, but it is true that it is difficult to implement. We agree that in Spain not have the lifestyle and culture to make this change, there are some important links between co-workers and we think this hinders it.

We are responsible to change our future. Considering as society evolves, how it evolves our lifestyles, tastes, interests, etc., must also change the way we work to adapt to reality.

[Task #5: Video case study – human resources management in the knowledge society]

At this stage of the seminar, despite the distance and the time and cultural differences involved, the teams were already well developed and using clearly defined coordination mechanisms. After learning about the state of the art of the knowledge society via readings and critical analysis, the students then turned to an analysis of a practical video case study. They watched an interview with a human resources manager from a multinational company working on a global level, and then discussed the skills profile the company required from the labour market. Like all the other materials, the video was created in html5 so that it would be accessible from any device: PC/Mac, smartphone or tablet (Android/iOS).

Below are several screenshots of the video used in this activity:



[Task #6: Case study: working globally in the knowledge society]

The final task for this seminar was to solve a case that analysed the ethical dimension of the social changes brought about by the impact of new technologies. Below is the case presented in this activity.

🕒 Show messages from: **Yesterday** • 7 days • 30 days • 3 months

🕒 **Yesterday** miércoles, 05 de diciembre de 2012

Peter It's a big lie that there is a huge shortage of professionals in Silicon Valley. I am outraged!

Luisa Hey, wait a second! Tell me what's wrong?

Peter You know that last year the company where I worked (Insurrance Software Systems) didn't renewed my contract. A few months before this occurs, hired a new employer in the India, whom they pay a little more than half of my salary, only €50,000. We work with information, and it doesn't matter if the person is not in the company's building, and of course they pay to him less...

Luisa Yeah, I know.

Peter You know I've been over a year looking for work intensely, even work with pay levels below €100,000, the salary I used to earn!! L

Luisa But why are you so angry now, if that's over a year and half ago???. Though that you already overcame that.

Peter I have been called from the same company to hire me again.

Luisa But that is a good new, right?


Peter Nooooooooooooo!! They want from me to finish training Jusae Mojutrid, the person they hired after me. I am so really outraged. 😡

Luisa The truth is that I understand your anger, especially when all financial press says that "Silicon Valley" needs more skilled workers to sustain its development. Actually they don't need skilled workers, what they want are just graduated 20 years old professionals, who don't mind to work 80 hours per week for a half salary, either here or directly from other countries.

Peter Totally agree!! Also in recent years, leaders from companies such as Microsoft Corp. and Intel Corp., have asked the U.S. Congress to double the 65,000 permissions for visas for foreign workers. They expose the same reason: we don't have sufficiently prepared professionals! If doesn't enter this number of foreign professionals in the sector, the growth rate will be slower and will have unfavorable consequences.

Luisa Yes, they say that the entry of specialists in information technology helps cover the 350,000 foreigners vacancies. According to Harris N. Miller, president of the Association of Information Technology, high-tech companies don't have enough talent to develop new products and grow their businesses.

Peter I send you a summary of a Business Week article I read a few weeks ago.

 Business Week.doc.docx Waiting Cancel

Luisa I leave, I'll have a coffee. I will read the article and we speak about it tomorrow, ok?

Peter OK, have fun. Bye!!

Finally, below we list the students who have participated in the seminar over the last few years:

Year	Seminar	Month	Students
2013	Virtual Working in the Knowledge Society	October	Total: 32 students Meiji: 15 students on the third-year course "Management Information Systems" of the Degree in Commerce URV: 17 students 13 students on the third-year course "Strategic Managements of Organisations" of the Degree in Labour Relations and Employment. 4 students on the course "Management of Environmental Quality and Corporate Responsibility of Firms" of the Master's in Environmental Law.
	Face-to-face class "Doing Business Globally"	September	Total: 34 students Meiji: 17 students on the third-year course "Management Information Systems" of the Degree in Commerce URV: 17 students taking different degrees at the URV.
2014	Virtual "Working in the Knowledge Society"	April	Total: 38 students Meiji: 20 students on the third-year course "Management Information Systems" of the Degree in Commerce. URV: 18 students on the second-year course "Introduction to Economics and Business" of the Degrees in Journalism, Audiovisual Communication and Publicity and Public Relations.
	Face-to-face class "Doing Business Globally"	September	Total: 15 students Meiji: 7 students on the third-year course "Management Information Systems" of the Degree in Commerce. URV: 8 students taking different degrees at the URV.
2015	Virtual "Working in the Knowledge Society"	March	Total: 30 students Meiji: 10 students on the third-year course "Management Information Systems" of the Degree in Commerce. URV: 20 students on the second-year course "Introduction to Economics and Business" of the Degrees in Journalism, Audiovisual Communication and Publicity and Public Relations.
	Face-to-face class "Doing Business Globally"	September	Total: 17 students Meiji: 9 students on the third-year course "Management Information Systems" of the Degree in Commerce. URV: 8 students taking different degrees at the URV.

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Testimonial



MARIO ARIAS OLIVA, Universitat Rovira i Virgili

This internationalization experience has improved the competences of our students, who have been able to work in an international and inter-disciplinary fashion, as is requested by companies nowadays.



ANTONIO PÉREZ-PORTABELLA, Universitat Rovira i Virgili

This type of training programme broadens the minds of our students and enables them to learn and work online in international contexts.



KIYOSHI MURATA, Director of the Centre for Business Information Ethics and lecturer at the MIS School of Commerce of Meiji University (Tokyo)

By taking part in this training programme, students have acquired the skills they need to work in a global and international environment.



YOHKO ORITO, Ehime University

Collaborating on this activity led by Dr Arias has been an enriching experience for students and teachers alike. We consider it to have been the best internationalization activity conducted by our University in the last academic year.



SHALINI KESAR, Southern Utah University. Dr Kesar received the Education Excellence Award at the 2016 Women Tech Awards.

Collaborating with this international team to design this activity has been a source of inspiration and learning that encourages me to continue researching teaching excellence in the internationalization of learning.

