UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN

Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL)

Educator Handbook

Table of Contents

Background

COIL is a framework of teaching and learning that promotes intercultural opportunities through a short-term virtual exchange program. Educators partner with an educator from another geographical location to plan a COIL experience within a course. The educators are usually within similar fields of study and work together to develop a collaborative task for students of divergent cultural backgrounds.

At the end of the course, students and faculty reflect on their unique experiences meeting, working, and learning with their peers. COIL is a registered service mark of The State University of New York. From the [SUNY COIL page:](#)

*"*COIL provides a means to:

- Develop intercultural awareness and communicative competencies, cost effectively and at scale
- Encourage appreciation for diverse backgrounds and perspectives
- Broaden and strengthen students' understanding of the discipline studied through applied projects and discussions
- Advance the use of technology tools for collaboration, communication and learning
- Prepare students to work in a multi-cultural and connected world."

COIL is intended to be integrated as a part of regular coursework, so there should be no extra costs for students. It is an alternative to study-abroad programs which are available to fewer students because of the travel expenses. Through COIL courses, more students can see and experience global learning through a world-class virtual opportunity.

Checklist of Tasks for Educators

- ☐ Find a COIL partner educator
- ☐ Plan together for student collaboration
- ☐ Have students complete a pre-COIL survey (Suggested questions in Appendix 1)
- ☐ Do the COIL project
- ☐ Have all students complete a post-coil survey (See Appendix 1)
- ☐ Share the [Global Engagement Scholarship](#) information with your students, offered through the International Student and Study Abroad Centre (ISSAC)
- ☐ Send your partner a small token such as a USask gift
- ☐ Repeat the partnership next year/term!

Pre-COIL Phase

Getting started requires evaluating your desired course, any institutional resources available to you for the COIL initiative and choosing a partner to begin collaboration with, setting up the model course. Each step below has guiding questions you may strive to answer before starting preparations.

Step 1: Evaluating Your Own Course

Consider these questions about your course before introducing it to your partner.

- What qualities of my course make it appropriate for the COIL experience?
- How will I adjust my syllabus to meet the demands/needs/concerns of my partner, considering possible linguistic and/or cultural differences?
- What interactive intercultural activities/approaches might suit this initiative?
- What aspects of my course are suitable for collaborative activities?
- What are my goals for the COIL project?
- What are my specific learning outcomes for the students in this project (beyond a learning outcome about intercultural awareness and communication)?
- How will I assess the students' performance and learning in this course?

Step 2: Determining your Institutional Resources

USask staff members are available to guide you along this journey. It is advised that you are familiar with the products and services available to USask staff and faculty before you connect with your partner.

- The university uses Zoom for video conferencing. Guidelines on how to use the platform may be accessed through the technology training opportunities https://paws5.usask.ca/#training
- IT Support Services are also available through the IT Support Portal
- Please refer to the Learning Technology Ecosystem (LTE) Toolkit for a collection of the teaching and learning technologies available at USask.

Step 3: Choosing a COIL Partner

Several factors may affect a successful partnership. To start, you may narrow down your institutions/s of choice by answering these questions:

- What **geographical area/s** are you interested in seeking partnership?
- How will connection with your selected area of interest contribute to the success of your COIL experience? Have you ever worked in or with anyone from your selected area(s) of interest?
- Does the USask have any existing partnerships with your school/s of choice? (See existing partnerships on USask's Move On webpage.
- Does your selected institution(s) have a course similar to yours?
- Does it have a COIL program?

Before you meet with a prospective partner, be prepared to find out about the following during your first meeting:

- Differences in institutional culture and time zones
- Their proposed course option(s)
- Agreement of terms in commitment
- Technological accessibility and semester alignment

Initial Meetings

Most people need some time to get to know their partner and work through future collaboration details. Fostering a supportive and respectful relationship helps support an initiative meant to give the students a unique cross-cultural experience based on equal effort, enthusiasm, and dedication.

To help you to determine your final decision for partnership, the following table could be used as a guide to record information.

Contact Information	USask Instructor	COIL Partner Instructor
Name		
Email Address		
Telephone Number		
Institution /Faculty/Course Website		
What language(s) are you fluent in?		
Do you belong to any professional organizations/networks? Which one(s)?		
Video Conferencing Platform Info.		
Time Zone		
Best day(s) and time to contact you for planning		
PERSONAL QUESTIONS *(in establishing an open line of communication; pick what works for you)*		
What brought you to teaching?		
How would you describe your teaching style?		
What is your university/school's city like? Are you from this area?		
Have you been to Canada? Where?		
Why did you decide to do a COIL course?		
What do you hope will be the biggest takeaway for the students?		

COURSE CONTENT		
Name of suggested course for the COIL initiative and the level of course?		
Language(s) of instruction		
If the language of instruction is not English, what resources might we use for translation?		
Preferred term and specific months for the COIL.?		
Preferred day and time for the COIL?		
Goals you would like to achieve through this collaboration?		
Suggested learning objectives or outcomes for this collaboration?		
What aspects of your syllabus do you think would be ideal for collaborative activities?		
Should we decide what aspects of our syllabi address the COIL collaboration?		
Is there any topic of interest that you would prioritize for intercultural discussions?		
How do you usually assess your students? How often do you assess?		
Would you like us to develop a new form of assessment?		
Would you prefer if we used our existing rubrics/checklists interchangeably?		
What will the students be assessed on? (assignments, reflections)		
TECHNOLOGICAL PREFERENCES		
Have you taught many courses online besides online delivery during COVID?		
Does your institution have a Learning Management System (LMS)? If yes, which one/s? Can external students access yours? [USask doesn't allow outside users to access Canvas courses.]		
Do the students regularly use your LMS?		

If no LMS, do you use any other software or technological tools in your classroom? If yes, which one/s?		
Is there IT support to help facilitate ?		
Do you have access to fast and reliable internet?		
Will the students likely have access to fast and reliable internet in their homes?		
Would your students use social platforms other than their usual choices?		
COURSE CULTURE		
Do your students meet face-to-face, asynchronous or synchronous online sessions?		
Is the reading load heavy or light?		
Are students typically participative?		
ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT		
Will you receive support from your school? If yes, from whom?		
Is COIL new to your institution?		
Do you have an international affairs office? If yes, will they also be involved in the facilitation of this program?		
Might there be an opportunity for a study-abroad experience for your students?		

Support and Assistance

At USask, the International Office has staff readily available to support you. For new and evolving COIL collaboration, connect with the Gwenna Moss Centre for Teaching and Learning at gmctl@usask.ca.

For established COIL partnerships, you may wish to connect with the International Office. The International Partner Specialists are experts in securing long-term formal partnerships with existing and new partners. See the partnership initiation form on their website to seek essential information from prospective partners. For direct assistance, email or phone 306-966-5904.
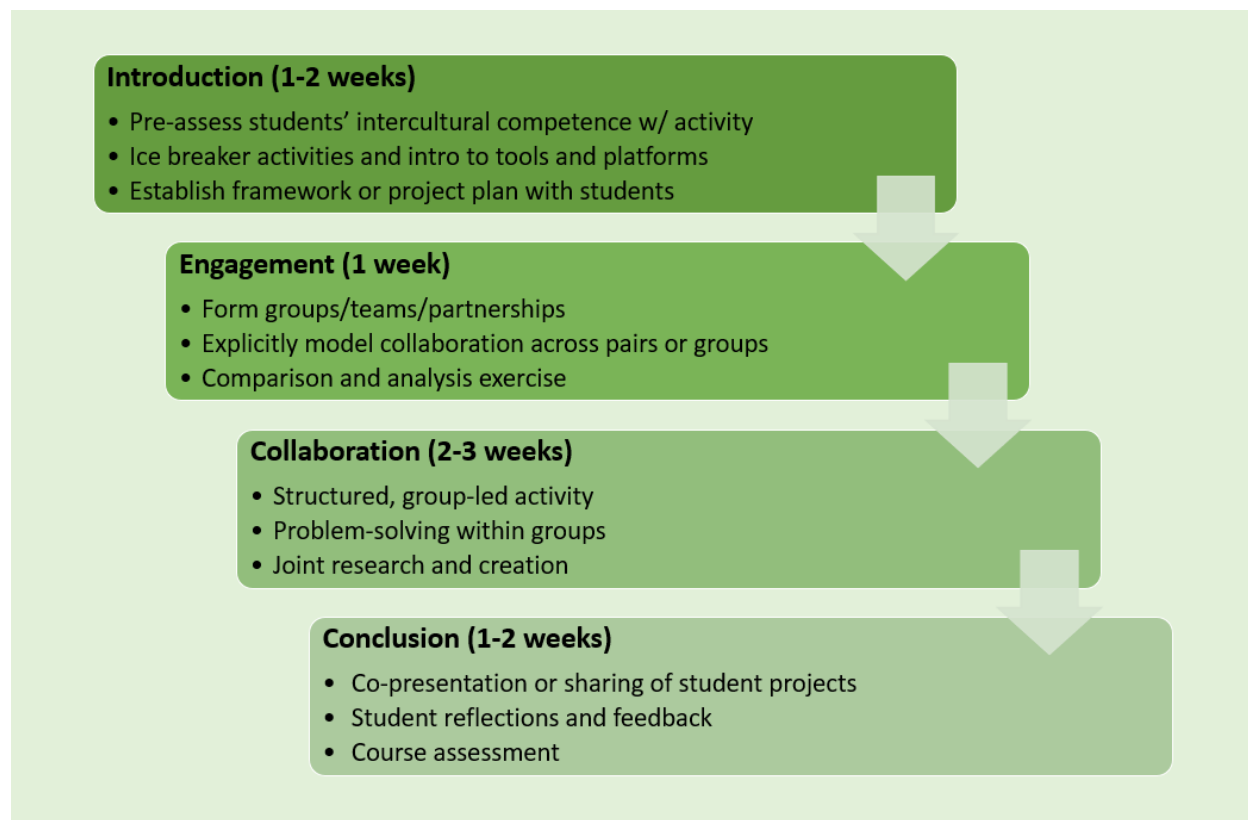
Pro-tip: *After you have decided on your partner, start working on a basic written memorandum of understanding or agreement between you and your partner to maintain a transparent and respectful line of communication. Use the templates included in this document as needed.*

Developing the Course

Develop a schedule with established timelines for the planning of each aspect of the course. This includes the goals, objectives, and activities for each module within the syllabus. You will also conceptualize your icebreaker, intercultural activities, assignments, assessments, class times, technological tools to be used and other logistical matters. You are also encouraged to let your students participate in a pre- and post- assessment activity to evaluate their level of intercultural competence and preparedness to work in an intercultural setting.

Example project structure

Introduction (1-2 weeks)
- Pre-assess students' intercultural competence w/ activity
- Ice breaker activities and intro to tools and platforms
- Establish framework or project plan with students

Engagement (1 week)
- Form groups/teams/partnerships
- Explicitly model collaboration across pairs or groups
- Comparison and analysis exercise

Collaboration (2-3 weeks)
- Structured, group-led activity
- Problem-solving within groups
- Joint research and creation

Conclusion (1-2 weeks)
- Co-presentation or sharing of student projects
- Student reflections and feedback
- Course assessment

COIL Privacy and Security Considerations

In many cases, collaborative online international learning (COIL) involves the collection, use and disclosure of student personal information; thoughtful consideration should be given to protect students' privacy throughout their participation and beyond.

Sharing Student Information

Sharing student information such as a USask email address and their first/last name with a partner school is likely a routine part of the collaboration process; students should still be told when this is

happening. The following phrasing might be helpful. Contact the Access and Privacy Officer for assistance.

> *"Personal information such as your name and USask email address, and relevant project results, may be shared with students, faculty, and staff at the participating educational institution(s) in order to facilitate your participation in collaborative online international learning activities."*

Recording Meetings

In the event you plan to record and share student collaboration meetings, participants must be notified and advised on the purpose of the recording, and if and where it will be available for viewing. These types of recordings should be retained only as needed to fulfil the purpose of the recording and should be securely deleted at the end of the term. Any advice about recording should be in line with guidance from Information & Communications Technologies (ICT), the Vice-Provost Teaching, Learning and Student Experience, or the Vice-Provost Faculty Relations.

Securely Storing and Sharing Information

When sending identifiable student information, please use USask approved file storage such as OneDrive. OneDrive is Microsoft's cloud storage tool that allows instructors and staff and students to store and share files. All the data stored on the app is protected by encryption and loss management. Your partner university may also have an approved, encrypted tool and this may be sufficient for the purpose of collaboration. Contact IT Support for more help https://itsupport.usask.ca/

Use of Student Images

Taking a photo of a virtual collaboration activity to be used for a limited purpose such as including it in a news article on a USask website or social media platform is permitted if you provide notice of your intention and obtain verbal consent of the participants.

Use of Student Assignments

For any additional use or disclosure of student assignments, beyond what is reasonable for the purposes of participating in the virtual collaboration activity, students are the copyright owners of their work, and as such instructors should have written consent to use/reproduce/etc. student work. Contact the Copyright Coordinator for assistance.

This "COIL Privacy and Security Considerations" section has been adapted by the Gwenna Moss Centre for Teaching and Learning with permission from a similar resource developed by Seneca College of Applied Arts and Technology's Privacy Office.

Icebreakers

At the beginning of your course, use these fun social activities to get students to know each other. Some introductory ideas to use in small groups (4 -10 students):

- Pick an animal and describe how they relate to that animal

- Share if they prefer coffee or tea, water or land, or other this/that questions.

- State two truths and one lie about themselves and have others in the team guess which statement is the lie.

- Find an object in your house that represents your life right now. Share what it means with the group.

Florida International University has other examples and more detailed examples [in Icebreaker Activities, FIU](#)

COIL Teaching Strategies

COIL requires inclusive and culturally responsive teaching to encourage student engagement. The university offers numerous training opportunities for faculty, staff, and students to learn and renew skills that will enable us to take the right approach to work with persons outside of our cultural groups. There is also a plethora of resources that covers inclusive teaching practices that may be found via the linked documents and webpages below:

- [Inclusive-Strategies Handout](#)

- [FIU Online Global Learning](#)

- [Colorado Department of Higher Education- Equity Toolkit: Inclusive Teaching and Learning](#)

- [York University- Open Pedagogy as a Creative Process](#)

- [York University- Developing and Implementing Interculturality](#)

- [Building Community Remotely](#)

- [Critical Practices for Anti-bias Education Classroom Culture](#)

Pro-tip: After you have completed your course design with your partner, ensure that you do a test run of the technological resources: Make sure:

- Students will have access to the LMS or chosen platform (re-check log-in information)

- Video and audio of the chosen technology are in good working order

- Resources and support contact information are up to date

Reflection

Reflective activities are used to assess the effectiveness of the course. Students should be allowed to provide feedback on the collaborative activities and assess if the overall experience has met or even exceeded their expectations. You and your partner should also be involved in this process, share with the students your experiences planning the course, whether you accomplished your goals and how you hope to make improvements in the future.

- FIU has examples of how the students may complete their reflective activities: Reflection Activities, FIU

During the COIL Experience

- After all your planning efforts, your students will meet their international instructor and classmates. They will then participate in **icebreaker activities** to get to know each other.

- They will be given opportunities to collaborate via web-based tools with each other to complete designated assignments.

- The students will also complete a mid-experience assessment or discussion to reflect on their experiences thus far.

Post-COIL Experience

- Ensure that your students get the opportunity to reflect on their experience working across differences at the end of the course (cultural, social, regional, gendered, sexual, and other) and how their perspectives and worldviews were questioned and reframed.

- You and your partner will also complete a post-experience debrief conversation and reflect on the impact. Will you try this COIL partnership again?

Additional Resources

- Handbook with helpful checklists for instructors from State University of New York
- Workbook to guide conversations with teaching partners from University of Minnesota
- Resources for Facilitating Global Learning from Florida International University
- Virtual Exchange Resources for Faculty from University of Guelph

APPENDIX 1

Sample Pre- and Post-COIL Surveys

Pre-Assessment Survey

Questions to establish baseline student cultural competencies before the COIL

Contact GMCTL to access to a pre-built USask survey

Class:

Instructor:
Date:

Please respond to the following questions as truthfully as possible. There is no right or wrong answer. Circle your answers.

1. I interact regularly with university students from other nations.   Yes/No
2. I have studied or traveled abroad.   Yes/No
    a. Place(s):
    b. Indicated the length of time abroad:
3. I am taking this course because I heard about the collaboration with other students enrolled at a university in another country.   Yes/No
    a. If yes, explain what you expect:

In response to the following questions, indicate whether you Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Neither Agree nor Disagree (N), Disagree (D), or Strongly Disagree (SD).

4. I regularly read about world news and events to learn about people in other nations/cultures.
    SA   A   N   D   SD
5. I am reluctant to visit other countries, especially when I cannot understand the language.
    SA   A   N   D   SD
6. Knowledge of other cultures will help me to better understand my own.
    SA   A   N   D   SD
7. Learning to collaborate cross-culturally will prepare me for the global workforce.
    SA   A   N   D   SD
8. I have a hard time communicating with individuals from different cultural backgrounds.
    SA   A   N   D   SD
9. I don't want to study or travel internationally because I prefer staying at home.
    SA   A   N   D   SD
10. I appreciate the value of different cultural perspectives on issues in the world.
    SA   A   N   D   SD
11. I am more comfortable studying with students who look, and talk like me.
    SA   A   N   D   SD
12. It is important to communicate in more than one language.
    SA   A   N   D   SD
13. I have a hard time communicating with people who do not speak or write English clearly.
    SA   A   N   D   SD

14. I like to work with other people on group projects.
         SA   A   N   D   SD
15. I am very comfortable communicating through the internet with other people.
         SA   A   N   D   SD

Please respond with a few sentences to the following items to let us know what you expect from the course.

16. What do you think will be your biggest challenge with the upcoming collaboration?
17. What do you think could be the greatest reward of the upcoming collaboration?
18. Which aspects concerning the culture of your collaboration partners are you most interested in?
19. Which issues of your culture would you especially like to discuss with your collaboration partners?
20. Identify at least one learning outcome you hope to achieve for yourself during this collaboration.

Thank you for your responses!

This survey (in its initial form) was developed and used in the COIL collaborations of Susan Coultrap-McQuin, SUNY Oswego, and Ina Pfeifer Issa, Empire State in Lebanon, 2012-2014.

Post-COIL Survey Questions

Survey to establish student cultural competency gains after the COIL.

Class:

Instructor:

Date:

Please respond to the following questions as truthfully as possible. There is no right or wrong answer. Circle your answers.

1. Before this collaboration I regularly interacted with persons from other nations.   Yes/No

2. I have studied or traveled abroad.   Yes/No

    a. Place(s):

    b. Indicated the length of time abroad:

In response to the following questions, indicate whether you Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Neither Agree nor Disagree (N), Disagree (D), or Strongly Disagree (SD).

After participating in this course/activity with students from another country, I am:

3. more aware and sensitive to cultural differences and similarities.
         SA   A   N   D   SD
4. more confident about communicating with people whose first language is not the same as my own.
         SA   A   N   D   SD
5. better able to understand my own culture and personal perspectives.
         SA   A   N   D   SD
6. better able to communicate with t individuals who have different cultural backgrounds.

	SA	A	N	D	SD

7. less interested in studying or travelling to other countries.
SA   A   N   D   SD
8. more confident to work with individuals with different cultural backgrounds from my own.
SA   A   N   D   SD
9. less interested to keep abreast of news and events in my partner's' country.
SA   A   N   D   SD
10. more interested in working only with those who look and talk like me.
SA   A   N   D   SD
11. more open to those from different national, cultural, religious, or socioeconomic backgrounds.
SA   A   N   D   SD
12. less interested in learning about global or international issues.
SA   A   N   D   SD

Please rate your level of agreement or disagreement relating to the following statements.

13. At the end of the collaboration, I feel differently about the need to speak more than one language.
SA   A   N   D   SD
14. Even though the collaboration is over, I am likely to remain in contact with some of my classmates from the partner country.
SA   A   N   D   SD
15. If I could take another course with an online international collaboration, I would do so again.
SA   A   N   D   SD

Please respond with a few sentences to the following items to let us know what you expect from the course.

17. What do you think were the greatest rewards with the collaboration?
18. What do you think were your biggest challenges with your collaboration?
19. Identify the aspects of culture you discussed with your collaboration partners.
20. Identify the most significant learning outcomes you achieved for yourself during the collaboration.

Thank you for your responses!

This survey (in its initial form) was developed and used in the COIL collaborations of Susan Coultrap-McQuin, SUNY Oswego, and Ina Pfeifer Issa, Empire State in Lebanon, 2012-2014.

APPENDIX 2

COIL Partnership Agreement Template

A guide for establishing understandings for your working relationship

1. Name of COIL Course	

2. Partners	
Name:	
Email:	
Course:	
Institution, City, Country:	
Position:	
Department and/or Program:	
Number of Students in Course:	
Modality for non-COIL component (face-to-face, all online, hybrid):	
Name:	
Email:	
Course:	
Institution, City, Country:	
Position:	
Department and/or Program:	
Number of Students in Course:	
Modality for Non-COIL Component (face-to-face, online, or hybrid):	

3. Language(s) of instruction at each institution

4. Primary language(s) of most students in each course

5. Language of student collaboration

6. Duration of the course
7. Student learning outcomes (1-3 only)
8. Description of how faculty will prepare students to engage in COIL (e.g. intercultural communication, interdisciplinary collaboration, and/or technological knowledge and skills)
9. Description of ice-breaker activity(ies)
10. Description of the student collaboration
11. Describe any common readings, films, or other resources students will use
12. Technology tools used (synchronous and asynchronous)
13. Technical support available at each institution
14. Description of how students will reflect on their COIL experience at each institution
15. Description of how the collaboration task(s) are graded and student learning is determined at each institution
(Include rubric if applicable)