

Internationally Active – Professionally Valuable

**Why it is worth being internationally active: advantages
for a given person, his/her co-workers, and university**

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InterAct

Credits

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1 Levels of international activity

Spending time in a foreign country and experiencing first-hand how work is done in a different culture and language forces staff to step outside their comfort zone. This creates opportunities for staff to develop new skills and open their minds, challenging themselves to take risks and growing not only at a professional level but also at a personal level. Besides the staff doing the mobility benefiting from it, institutions also benefit from that mobility. The knowledge acquired can be passed on to improve practices, adding value at an institutional level and helping co-workers, who will be positively impacted by the knowledge gained and hopefully will want to become more internationally active, enhancing the institution's international culture. This way, the added value of staff being internationally active can be divided into three levels: personal, professional, and institutional. Being internationally active impacts the way of thinking and the way we go through life, providing tools to help deal with adversities and become more creative and innovative. Innovation and entrepreneurship are key aspects of today's workforce and valuable assets for institutions.

The following sections will describe each added value of the three levels for which it is worth being internationally active.

2 Personal Level

At a personal level, value can be added regarding:

- **Language skills:** By working abroad, staff will have the opportunity to improve their language skills. Developing language skills can positively impact the career since organisations have a global presence nowadays, and being fluent in a second language is often helpful (if not required).
- **Cross-cultural awareness and social experience:** staff will learn about new points of view and enlarge their worldview. People's points of view and actions are often limited by their personal experiences, values, cultural background, and biased perspectives. By meeting people from different cultural and social backgrounds, staff will gain new perspectives that will widen their horizons. Having to interact with people from different cultures also forces staff to be more social and aware of social and cultural differences because it forces people to be alert (what is acceptable in one culture might not be in another) and be mindful of different perspectives and points of view.
- **Communication skills:** Stronger communication skills must be developed when communicating with people from different cultures and backgrounds. Better communication skills provide more

confidence when public speaking helps in many aspects of our day-to-day and professional life. Also, stronger communication skills provide better means for negotiation, which institutions value.

- **Confidence:** self-confidence is closely related to the way we see ourselves. At a professional level, it is mainly related to how we perceive our abilities and skills. By trusting ourselves more, we free ourselves up to make more confident decisions and become better communicators. Another aspect of self-confidence is how we view failures. By not being afraid to fail, we can take more risks and be more innovative and creative.
- **Leadership:** a good leader knows the difficulties and inspires others to overcome them. Outstanding leadership has vision, honour, empathy, passion, commitment, respect, and good communication, among other values. These values are not always easy to master, and international mobilities help to understand that not everything that seems easy is easy for others and that it is necessary to be solidary and be able to empower others so that there is a success as a group.

3 Professional Level

At a professional level, value can be added regarding:

- **Exchange of knowledge:** Exchanging knowledge is essential since it provides tools for making decisions faster and more confidently. It also reduces the need for training and stimulates innovation.
- **Learning from best practices:** Learning from best practices allows innovative and creative ideas to emerge, increases efficiency and competence, and facilitates the creation of a learning culture.
- **A more comprehensive network of contacts:** working abroad helps you build invaluable relationships with people from all over the world and will accompany you all your life, even enable making life-long friends. In addition, some connections made during international mobilities can lead to career opportunities, including internships, research, and project partnerships. The wider your network, the greater the likelihood you will have a happy and satisfying career and social opportunities.
- **International experience means having a competitive edge:** whether the mobility is short or long, the mobility experience on your curriculum vitae will give you a valuable competitive advantage.

In addition, institutions highly value a global perspective and having it will pave the way to excellent opportunities in the future.

4 Institutional Level

At an institutional level, value can be added regarding:

- **Quality of teaching, training, and research:** Each country has its own unique style of teaching and management. Working abroad will allow staff to expand their horizons and develop the capacity to adapt to various educational settings. This capacity for adaptation to these different styles of teaching and managing is valuable as an asset. In addition, the knowledge gained can be used to improve teaching and management practices, applying the knowledge gained to the institution's reality.
- **Reputation:** An institution's prestige or reputation is often more important than its actual quality because it represents the institution's perceived excellence, which guides prospective students' decisions to enrol with the institution. Building a respected identity, in this context, gives an institution a competitive advantage. (See <https://www.qs.com/what-makes-reputation-important-in-higher-education/>).
- **Institutional networks:** One of the significant advantages of institutional networks is the ability and greater ease of sharing knowledge and creating partnerships and agreements. A good institutional network allows for more mobilities and best practices to be shared, allowing institutions to grow internationally.

In conclusion, being internationally active brings many advantages to the staff on a personal and professional level. It provides means for growth at both levels, leading to better-qualified and satisfied staff. Furthermore, having staff being internationally active also has advantages for the institutions since the positive impact on less active staff is not to be ignored, leading to better work practices and workflows and making the work environment more pleasant.

5 References

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