

WP4 Interviews to investigate skills set for IDOs National report for UK



1. Research sample

Five face to face interviews were conducted from a sample who had indicated that they were interested in further discussions in the previous survey. The sample included a variety of different roles involved in international activities: a Further Education advisor with international experience; an international project coordinator; an international business development manager; a vocational teacher with international experience and a manager with international responsibility and commercial experience.

2. Summary of research findings

PROFESSIONAL VALUES
Understand and respect different cultures and ways of working to gain a broader perspective
Embed international activities within your organisation identifying opportunities for staff continuing professional development (CPD), student enrichment and strategic development
Communicate clearly, listen and value others' views and check for understanding
Share good practice and learn from each other
Work as a team with honesty and integrity, build trust, add value and deliver on time

UNDERSTANDING AND KNOWLEDGE	PRACTICAL SKILLS
Understand and apply project management techniques	Coordinate people and tasks to meet agreed objectives and deadlines
Be willing to learn from different cultures and ways of working	Work effectively with others showing empathy and recognising individual strengths
Develop specialist knowledge depending on the activity	Organise research, write reports and present results
Understand budget and policy procedures	Develop good systems for financial controls
Know about different travel options	Travel independently
Be clear about objectives and options	Be self motivated and willing to take decisions
Build network through various means e.g. conferences, meetings, etc	Network with others and build links
Keep up to date with ICT developments and applications	Develop ICT skills for effective communication

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Develop language skills to aid communication with others	Communicate in different languages
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3. Any other findings relating to the development of competence based qualifications

Further research on what has already been developed from UK National Agency (Ecotec) <http://www.leonardo.org.uk/> and the UK Association of Colleges http://www.aoc.co.uk/en/Policy_and_Advisory_Work/aoc_international/ National Vocational Qualifications, the UK Council for International Student Affairs www.ukcisa.org.uk Continuing Professional Development – now a requirement for UK teachers in Further Education <http://www.ifl.ac.uk/> Competence based qualifications in cultural understanding could have a broader appeal to the business sector relating to WP10 Exploitation of results.

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4. Appendix

Interview 1

Thank you for taking part in our previous project survey. We would like to build on this by finding out your opinions on the skills required when working on international activities. This will help us to develop a competence based qualification.

1. First I'd like you to think about an international activity in which you have been involved that has gone particularly well. Which skills helped produce a successful result?

I worked on a Comenius project, often underused in Further Education (FE), on students with learning difficulties from four different countries. The coordination of this project was sometimes a challenge as I also had to do my regular curriculum work. I involved staff from different programme areas in my college (hospitality, arts, learning support assistants) and had to arrange times for them to get together – not always easy. Everyone was so enthused by what they achieved. It wasn't a bolt on activity but was integrated into the curriculum. It helped our students with numeracy skills, using Euros – a different currency- and they learnt a lot about Europe.

2. Now think about an international activity that has not worked well. What skills were lacking that hindered a successful result?

No one took control of this project, there wasn't a coordinator as such, work was passed around. The application wasn't followed. The focus was on the travel budget rather than the real objectives. Leadership skills were lacking. The coordinator needs to be direct, ensure everyone has signed up to their tasks.

3. Imagine you were to start afresh and be trained to work in international activities. What would be the main areas of knowledge and understanding you would need and why?

International roles vary from recruiting international students to project management. General skills needed include a willingness to learn from other cultures, an outgoing personality, good communication, project management, and knowledge in the specialist area. The role is best suited to someone who likes meeting people from other countries where English isn't the first language and who enjoys networking and travel.

When I first started, I had to make a presentation at a Comenius contact seminar. This helped to build my confidence and develop my presentation skills. To learn about bid writing, I sat in with an experienced person and input the data. I conducted research e.g. labour market information and was included in meetings with an

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experienced person. It takes gradually gain the knowledge.

time to train someone but you

4. What do you see as the professional values that those working on international activities should adopt e.g. respecting cultural differences and ways of working?

Understanding different cultures, respecting other cultures, interested in finding out how others live and work. The individual should also know when to show discretion.

5. Thinking about attitudes in your workplace, are international activities valued by others? And what are the reasons for this?

Attitudes are changing. International work used to be seen as a 'jolly'. Everyone is so busy in FE and there is a fire fighting culture. When international activities are embedded within continuing professional development for staff, the staff see it as an opportunity. European projects are included in the staff's CPD brochure at the start of the year. They have the opportunity to select students for mobility exchanges. For staff mobility, they keep a log of their time abroad, what they have learnt and what they can transfer to the classroom. Projects can help to develop teachers' and students' skills for working in a global economy.

6. Any other thoughts about the competences required to be successful in international work?

You need to work to the work plan, be on time, keep people on track, have regular meetings, and make sure everyone knows the objectives and tasks to be achieved.

One person tends to be the champion. If they leave, the expertise is lost. You can become a bit of a control freak. You need to get more people involved and delegate to make the job easier and provide opportunities for other staff to develop. You also need good financial skills to keep to budget.

7. Finally, are you aware of any systems for recognising existing or planned competences particularly in terms of non-formal and informal learning? If so, can you explain more about these systems?

Ecotec, the UK National Agency, looked at the validation of Leonardo project manager skills some time ago. The Association of Colleges is re launching its International Charter at an FE institutional level for more information go to http://www.aoc.co.uk/en/Policy_and_Advisory_Work/aoc_international/

There is a working group for the professional development strand. There is a peer review system at the pilot phase.

Thank you for your time. Would you like us to keep you up to date on the progress with this project? If so, please provide contact details.

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Please indicate your Job

FE advisor, work for AOC and UK Council for International Student Affairs. Previous experience as a teacher and coordinator

Role:

Interview 2

- 1. First I'd like you to think about an international activity in which you have been involved that has gone particularly well. Which skills helped produce a successful result?**

Open communication with partners, structured meetings with group work, a good project manager who keeps everyone on track and on time. A focus on achieving goals at meetings. Good project leadership, time management for self and others, accurate minutes of meetings with clear actions.

- 5. Now think about an international activity that has not worked well. What skills were lacking that hindered a successful result?**

Poor project management and leadership. Meetings didn't engender good open discussion or allow in depth questions. There were no checks to ensure that partners had understood requirements. You need to be tolerant and understand that not all partners can work at the same speed e.g. the levels of understanding may differ.

- 6. Imagine you were to start afresh and be trained to work in international activities. What would be the main areas of knowledge and understanding you would need and why?**

Training in project management, project planning, team leadership, team types e.g. Belbin, finding out what individuals are good at to get the best out of them and people management.

- 7. What do you see as the professional values that those working on international activities should adopt e.g. respecting cultural differences and ways of working?**

There can be language problems i.e. you think people have understood but they haven't. You need to check for understanding. There can be differing senses of urgency and keeping to timescales.

- 8. Thinking about attitudes in your workplace, are international activities valued by others? And what are the reasons for this?**

Only the people involved in international activities value them. Others generally don't understand or see the benefits such as generation of new ideas, broader thinking and courses.

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9. Any other thoughts about the competences required to be successful in international work?

You need to be flexible, accept the need to travel and possible language difficulties. You need to be independent, happy to travel and find places on your own. Hints and tips provided by the organiser on the best way to travel and directions are very useful.

10. Finally, are you aware of any systems for recognising existing or planned competences particularly in terms of non-formal and informal learning? If so, can you explain more about these systems?

National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) are the only way in the UK

Thank you for your time. Would you like us to keep you up to date on the progress with this project? If so, please provide contact details.

Please indicate your Job Role: (international project or mobility co-ordinator, vocational teacher with international responsibility, manager with international responsibility)

International project coordinator and manager

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Interview 3

- 1. First I'd like you to think about an international activity in which you have been involved that has gone particularly well. Which skills helped produce a successful result?**

Key skills are communication with others, tolerance, being welcoming, dedication, willing to work long hours and the drive to make a success. Good internal communication within the college and external communication to market further education. You need to be able to work to targets and deliver.

- 2. Now think about an international activity that has not worked well. What skills were lacking that hindered a successful result?**

Poor communication and decision making skills.

- 3. Imagine you were to start afresh and be trained to work in international activities. What would be the main areas of knowledge and understanding you would need and why?**

You need to keep up to date with changing rules and fees so attending workshops led by organisations such as the UK Council for International Student Affairs www.ukcisa.org.uk. You learn mainly by experience.

- 4. What do you see as the professional values that those working on international activities should adopt e.g. respecting cultural differences and ways of working?**

Understanding and improving policies, professional values and having an ethical approach are important. Welcoming diversity and giving very clear instructions as well as being financially transparent.

- 5. Thinking about attitudes in your workplace, are international activities valued by others? And what are the reasons for this?**

International student recruitment is definitely valued by others in the college where there is a strong policy of equality and diversity. We have developed an international approach and ethos and this is included in the College mission statement. Senior management also demonstrates support.

- 6. Any other thoughts about the competences required to be successful in international work?**

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You need to have good networking and communication skills. It isn't difficult work but you often have to make decisions on your own. You have colleagues but no consortium. You need good Marketing skills to find new markets. You need to make

links with other organisations.

7. Finally, are you aware of any systems for recognising existing or planned competences particularly in terms of non-formal and informal learning? If so, can you explain more about these systems?

The UK Council for International Student Affairs runs some courses and workshops

Thank you for your time. Would you like us to keep you up to date on the progress with this project? If so, please provide contact details.

Please indicate your Job Role: (international project or mobility co-ordinator, vocational teacher with international responsibility, manager with international responsibility)

International business development manager previously a teacher

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Interview 4

- 1. First I'd like you to think about an international activity in which you have been involved that has gone particularly well. Which skills helped produce a successful result?**

Moodle virtual learning environment skills. I trained the students before their mobility and was able to help them when they were on their placement in Spain. Students need someone to drive them in the right direction. The students gained a huge amount from their experience. It also helped me to see what could be achieved, define students' needs, develop my own professional experience and gain a broader perspective. Web design skills were also useful on another European project.

- 2. Now think about an international activity that has not worked well. What skills were lacking that hindered a successful result?**

Lack of language skills as I had to rely on others speaking English. Learning foreign languages would help.

- 3. Imagine you were to start afresh and be trained to work in international activities. What would be the main areas of knowledge and understanding you would need and why?**

I would start by learning a foreign language.

- 4. What do you see as the professional values that those working on international activities should adopt e.g. respecting cultural differences and ways of working?**

They should share good practice, develop joint learning materials and compare different approaches. It is very refreshing to visit other practitioners and vice versa. This provides a source for new ideas and it is reassuring to know that they have similar problems. These experiences can be passed on to students.

- 5. Thinking about attitudes in your workplace, are international activities valued by others? And what are the reasons for this?**

A lot of people don't know what is going on. Sometimes the mobilities are too long for staff and students. There is clearly a reciprocal benefit in having links with a VET college in a different country.

- 6. Any other thoughts about the competences required to be successful in international work?**

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You need to be outgoing and join in. You need to be competent in your subject area and look at what you can bring to the group.

7. Finally, are you aware of any systems for recognising existing or planned competences particularly in terms of non-formal and informal learning? If so, can you explain more about these systems?

A mobility experience would count as CPD for the Institute for learning teaching qualification and as staff development.

Thank you for your time. Would you like us to keep you up to date on the progress with this project? If so, please provide contact details.

Please indicate your Job Role: (international project or mobility co-ordinator, vocational teacher with international responsibility, manager with international responsibility)

Vocational teacher with project and mobility experience

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Interview 5

- 1. First I'd like you to think about an international activity in which you have been involved that has gone particularly well. Which skills helped produce a successful result?**

A good project brief so that you understand what is expected. Good communication skills: listening and understanding what others are saying not just talking. The ability to look for common threads i.e. similar things with the same objectives is useful. You need to do what has been agreed on time and have a sense of fun. You need to be open, friendly and have a common goal.

- 2. Now think about an international activity that has not worked well. What skills were lacking that hindered a successful result?**

Unclear leadership and objectives are a problem. Collective leadership is important. If there is mistrust and poor relationships between people, this can hinder progress as well as only promoting your own view.

- 3. Imagine you were to start afresh and be trained to work in international activities. What would be the main areas of knowledge and understanding you would need and why?**

Languages are very important and the study of different cultures. Experience of international travel is useful. You need to be open minded, mature and accept that what you do in the UK is not the only way to tackle issues. You need to have a cooperative nature and be a completer finisher. You need to break down tasks towards goals.

- 4. What do you see as the professional values that those working on international activities should adopt e.g. respecting cultural differences and ways of working?**

Honesty and integrity, building trust and delivering on time.

- 5. Thinking about attitudes in your workplace, are international activities valued by others? And what are the reasons for this?**

Attitudes are variable. International activities are sometimes seen as nice but not important across the college.

- 6. Any other thoughts about the competences required to be successful in international work?**

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You need to be a content expert who is able to add value. It can be challenging to work across different cultures e.g. body language and tone can be misinterpreted. You have to understand the local customs and not take offence. Cultural differences are much greater outside Europe.

7. Finally, are you aware of any systems for recognising existing or planned competences particularly in terms of non-formal and informal learning? If so, can you explain more about these systems?

From my business experience, there weren't suitable courses on cultural differences. You learnt from others such as ex pats and local experts. Certificates in international commerce provide the hard edged skills such as sales but not cultural understanding.

Thank you for your time. Would you like us to keep you up to date on the progress with this project? If so, please provide contact details.

Please indicate your Job Role: (international project or mobility co-ordinator, vocational teacher with international responsibility, manager with international responsibility)

Manager with international responsibility with significant previous international commercial experience