

MEET (Maximise the Erasmus Experience Together): Gains, Challenges and Proposals

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Abstract : Every year our School in DIT (Dublin Institute of Technology) hosts approximately 80 Erasmus students from partner universities across Europe. Our own students are required to spend a compulsory 3rd year abroad on study and/or work placements. This is an extremely rewarding experience for all of the students, however, it can also be a challenging one. With this in mind, we started a project which aimed to make this transition as easy and productive as possible. The project, which is called MEET: Maximise the Erasmus Experience Together, focuses on the students' own active engagement in learning and preparation - outside of the classroom -and their own self-directed pursuit of opportunities to develop their confidence and preparedness, which would work as an important foundation for the transformative learning that study abroad implies. We focussed on creating more structured opportunities where Erasmus students from our partner universities (currently studying at DIT) and our second-year students could interact and learn from each other, and in so doing improve both their language and intercultural skills. Our experience so far has been quite positive and we have seen how students taking part in this project have developed as autonomous learners as well as enhanced both their linguistic and intercultural knowledge. As the linguistic element of our project was one of our main priorities, we asked the students to keep a reflective diary on the activities that were organised by the group in the TL. Also, we use questionnaires as well as personal interviews to assess their development. However, there are challenges and proposals we would make to bring this project forward for the near future.

Keywords : erasmus, intercultural competence, linguistic competence, extra curriculum activities

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