

# Professionalisation through internationalisation

Would you like to use internationalisation to professionalise staff? Let colleagues work on international competences at home and abroad. Internationalisation allows staff to challenge themselves and boosts personal and professional development

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# Introduction

Internationalisation activities prepare students for the international labour market and intercultural society. In both, they will need international competences like knowledge of languages, intercultural sensitivity and flexibility. It is important for staff to obtain international competences too: for their professional development and to put them in a position to guide students. There will be no internationally competent students without internationally competent teachers. Although we focus primarily on teachers in Vocational Education and Training (VET) in this white paper, the tips we give also apply to other mbo education professionals.

The optimal use of internationalisation as a tool for the professional development of staff relies on a co-operation with HR. It enables HR to contribute to the embedding of internationalisation in the school and you are able to facilitate opportunities and possibilities for continued staff development (in an international context).

This document contains tips and tricks on how to get started, in line with your individual needs and the needs of the school.

## Internationalisation at Home or abroad?

**There are all kinds of opportunities for you as a professional to continue your development through internationalisation. This is a vital factor, as without internationally skilled teachers, we won't be able to train internationally skilled students.**

Start by asking yourself what you want to gain from international experience. Do you want to gain new teaching skills? Learn a foreign language? Learn to work with colleagues from other countries? Or perhaps your school is in the process of innovating the education it provides and you want to observe certain teaching methods. Naturally, you could also just be interested in having a new challenge or an inspiring experience.

### **Internationalisation at Home**

You do not necessarily have to go abroad to internationalise yourself as a professional. You can achieve this in your own environment too. We call this Internationalisation at Home.

There are all kinds of opportunities to gain international competences in your country or region. As a VET coordinator, you could organise a project with placement companies in the region that have an international orientation. Whenever you organise collaborative projects for students, with partner schools or companies abroad, you will have the opportunity to experience foreign perspectives and systems yourself too. This will teach you how to work with colleagues from other countries, usually in a different language. One example of a platform for international cooperation is eTwinning. For more information, see <https://school-education.ec.europa.eu/en/etwinning>.

### Going abroad

More and more education professionals are seeking inspiration abroad. Teachers are attending training programmes and language courses or explore how it is to teach abroad.

### What can you do as an international coordinator or teacher?

- Visit students during their internship abroad
- Do a teaching placement at a company, (just) across the border or perhaps even outside Europe
- Attend an international conference or convention
- Visit foreign schools to see how they approach educational themes

It is important for both students and teachers to develop international competences. On the next page, you will find the International Competence Model for teachers and staff, which we have developed with a number of professionals from primary, secondary, vocational education and training and higher education sectors.

One hundred percent of teachers who have been abroad recommend their colleagues to do the same. (Erasmus+ participant reports)



# International competences for teachers

An overview of potential learning outcomes of internationalisation

## Intercultural competence



### Attitudes

- open-mindedness
- acknowledgement and appreciation of differences
- respect for diversity
- interest in different perspectives
- curiosity



### Knowledge

- knowledge of foreign languages
- (general) knowledge of communication styles
- (general) knowledge of one's own and other cultures
- familiarity with the principles of profiling and stereotyping based on identity



### Skills

- confidence to communicate in foreign languages
- listening, observing, and interpreting
- perspective-taking
- mediating and relating (bringing different people and perspectives together)
- dealing with uncertainty, managing differences and 'conflicts'
- collaborating in international teams
- intercultural relationship building



**No internationally competent students without internationally competent teachers.**



## International orientation



### Education and the profession

- forging and maintaining an international network and collaborations
- applying new pedagogical and teaching skills, both general and discipline-specific, in one's own teaching
- applying knowledge about international competences and their importance in one's own teaching
- ability to place the discipline in an international and cultural perspective
- knowledge of own and other countries' education systems
- knowledge of international developments in one's own discipline and professional practice
- acknowledgement and utilisation of cultural diversity in the group or class



### Society and the world

- familiarity with supranational organisations and objectives, such as the SDGs, UN, EU, and global citizenship
- ability to place societal issues in an international and cultural perspective
- engagement with societal and political issues at a global level
- critical attitude towards one's own social position and the position of others, worldwide



### Personal qualities

- self-confident
- innovative
- self-aware
- reflective
- flexible
- adaptable
- resilient
- creative
- entrepreneurial
- critical attitude towards and awareness of job satisfaction and career opportunities
- digital skills
- organisational and leadership skills



## Tip 1

Formulate a vision on internationalisation as a tool for professionalisation and align it with the organisational strategy on teaching and staff training.



## Tip 2

Conduct a needs assessment among staff to identify which international competences are important and which training activities are being undertaken.

*"We have worked with HR colleagues to develop a questionnaire that we can use to conduct exploratory research on the 'internationalisation and teacher professionalisation' theme among teachers, programme managers and other staff. This is important because of the crucial role teachers and teams play in the internationalisation of education. The questionnaire will enable us to gain insight into how teachers and other staff develop international competences and also how the International Office and HR can work together to encourage this as much as possible. It will improve our insight into training needs as well. We would also like to know the extent to which internationalisation is a subject of discussion among managers and colleagues in the teaching teams."*

**International Office, ROC van Amsterdam - Flevoland**





### Tip 3

Talk to staff about internationalisation opportunities and possibilities in development interviews, team discussions and training programmes. Document these ambitions in personal or team plans.

Take possible internationalisation outcomes - international competences - as the starting point and decide which activities to undertake to achieve them.

*“Together with the Internationalisation Department and HR colleagues, we are a partner to the ‘**From a rookie to an expert**’ Erasmus project. The aim is to connect internationalisation and HR by offering modules and training courses at different levels. We are also working towards the introduction of a pathway model in which the three levels (beginner - medium - expert) of development are visible and can be used as the basis for the development of input and training courses that benefit staff competence development.”*

**Hanneke Smid, Head of External Affairs, Alfa-college**



## Tip 4

Link internationalisation activities for staff with HR activities. For example, training courses and events or job shadowing.

For example, facilitate training courses on:

- language and culture - like English or German - to work towards the attainment of a Cambridge/Goethe certificate
- getting started with internationalisation
- online exchange with an international partner
- intercultural communication

*"The International Office has a single point of contact in HR, who we meet up with to update each other on a regular basis. In these meetings, we look for starting points - in terms of the range of training courses that the academy provides. By integrating training courses like intercultural didactics and 'I want to gain international knowledge; what's the best way for me to do this?' in the academy, we hope to awaken the interest of staff who might not normally be on the radar of the International Office or who are not aware of international opportunities yet. An intercultural communication workshop was organised recently as part of the instructor training course. Insights that have real added value for instructors in the classroom."*

**Ellen Geerts, International Office, Deltion college**



## Tip 5

Inform and involve new staff before and during the onboarding programme.

Highlight the importance of the internationalisation theme at school in job profiles and vacancy texts. Include terms like 'internationalisation' and 'international experience' in these texts. Also, share information, online and when inducting new staff, about the importance of internationalisation and the opportunities available to staff and students.





## Tip 6

Share good examples of internationalisation as a tool for professionalisation.

Organise a knowledge festival for the school, have colleagues join international networks and facilitate the exchange of good examples and experiences in teams. Consider the added value of sharing internationalisation activities internally. Through meetings or via intranet for example.

*“We are working towards achieving the connection of internationalisation to the professionalisation agenda in a number of ways. For example, informing and inspiring colleagues on this topic on an online platform, facilitated by HR and the International Office. Teachers and staff will be able to head to this platform for good examples and information about the opportunities we are offering in the context of internationalisation. This will enable us to encourage exchanges with other HE institutions abroad, for example. Teachers can contact both the International Office and HR about the above via the platform.”*

**Marlie van Dun, Director of International Affairs,  
Breda University of Applied Sciences**

*“We appointed the first Internationalisation ambassadors in 2021. They are given a number of hours for this role, which they use to awaken an interest in internationalisation in their teams and clusters, support them in this context and be a discussion partner for the Internationalisation Policy Advisor.”*

**Odyle de Roos-Smits, Internationalisation Policy Advisor,  
MBO Amersfoort**

## Inspiration

There are already many good examples of internationalisation activities for VET professionals. Be inspired by the **internationalisation map** and its practical examples of internationalisation in VET. To find out more, scan the QR code. On this page the video's are translated in English.



# Conclusion

There are various ways to take the first steps to connect internationalisation to HR. We hope this document will give you some initial pointers. If you have any questions, please contact: **mbo@nuffic.nl**

The tips in this white paper are the result of discussions with Deltion College, MBO Amersfoort, Alfa-college, ROC van Amsterdam - Flevoland and Breda University of Applied Sciences.

