



MODES

Innovative modes for learning in international classrooms

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1. Abstract

Today, higher education institutions face the imperative to adapt and evolve to meet the diverse needs of an international student body. The MODES Project is a comprehensive initiative aimed at enhancing the learning experiences of international students and fostering inclusivity within higher education. By encompassing both desk and field research, this document provides a comprehensive overview of the key concepts and practices at both organizational and professional levels, providing practical strategies for institutions to embrace and embody internationalization.

The desk research undertaken as part of this project lays the groundwork for understanding the challenges and opportunities associated with international education. It highlights the surge in the global significance of international students within higher education institutions and explores the concept of 'connectedness,' emphasizing the need for a sense of belonging amidst unprecedented disruptions, particularly in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, the research underscores the imperative of continuous improvement in Higher Education services, offering tailored support, particularly through introductory courses, to aid the integration of first-year international students into the academic environment and language.

Furthermore, the field research engages directly with international students and staff and explores institutional strategies implemented to support them. It delves into the international student experience across three partner countries: Italy, Greece, and the Netherlands, revealing diverse perspectives and challenges faced by international students. The study emphasizes the importance of broader support services, such as health services, administrative assistance, and community integration initiatives, to facilitate smoother transitions for international students.

The subsequent sections of this document present MODES concepts at both organizational and professional levels. Organizational-level concepts explore the practical support services, student-to-student support services, alumni networks, the buddy system, peer-to-peer mentoring, exchange programs, and global activity that contribute to an enriching international student experience. At the professional level, the document outlines the next steps in the implementation of the MODES concepts, providing a roadmap for educators and institutions to enhance their capacity for delivering international education.

The insights derived from this project aim to catalyze positive change and empower institutions to embrace the diverse cultural tapestry that defines contemporary academia, fostering a global community of learners and educators dedicated to enriching the educational landscape.



2. Project information

Europe has been traditionally considered a destination for academic excellence by international students seeking to attend a course abroad. Long-standing universities have a strong presence throughout the continent attracting over 1.3 million international learners per year. In addition, more than 55% of the total individuals undertaking tertiary education come from other continents (Eurostat, 2020).

However, upon the arrival of learners at the hosting universities, the actual quality of the education they receive differs significantly from the set expectations, due to the capacity of the institutions to deliver classes according to the special needs of foreign students. These needs include, but are not limited to, smooth social inclusion and internationalized learning provision (Perez-Encinas, 2017).

Within this context, it is not an uncommon phenomenon to lose some international students through the cracks, as they lack specialized support and face substantial challenges regarding social integration and academic performance, even though they meet the same admission requirements as domestic ones. At the same time, HEIs do not have clear communication strategies to address the needs of learners who are not proficient in the local language. This limits the quality of the international learning offered, especially the one taking place outside the classroom.

Lastly, students are expected to quickly adjust to the differences in the teaching and learning systems, resulting in increased and added pressure on academic success. This is described by the term “culture shock” which is a preventative factor for numerous students who wish to pursue studies abroad (Academic Cooperation Association). Not to mention that this discourages them from engaging in the local communities, hindering the promotion of European values. Unfortunately, 85% of international students suffer from this shock. According to Eurostat, Germany, Italy, and Cyprus are some of the most prominent countries for international learning.

In detail, Germany has the largest share of foreign students in Europe (23%), while Italy and the Netherlands have the third (8%). Similarly, Cyprus presents the second highest rate of local to international students, within HEIs. However, countries such as Greece accommodate few international learners, due to the in-flexibility of the courses provided and the language barriers. In both cases institutions need to come up with creative responses and sustainable solutions, either to address the needs of a diversifying population of international students or to increase their international admission rate altogether.

The answer to the above challenges is MODES since it aims at equipping tutors with the necessary skills to reinforce their international students' learning experiences and to integrate them not only into university campus life but also into society, fostering their international identity. MODES has 4 specific objectives in addition to the WP-specific ones:

- SO1: Strengthen professors and tutors' capacity to create inclusive classrooms for international/ foreign students
- SO2: Create new and more inclusive for incoming students' methodological approaches and pedagogies for international learning



- SO3: Improve the international learning experience of foreign students into the classroom and the campus life
- SO4: Boost the integration of international students in the host EU countries.

3. Methodology

The research methodology for the MODES project adopts a mixed-methods approach, combining both desk research and field research to allow for a thorough examination of best practices, challenges, and needs related to the inclusion of international students in HEIs.

The desk research phase involved a systematic review and analysis of existing best practices in the field of international education. This stage enabled the identification of key themes, trends, and best practices relevant to enhancing the international student experience within HEIs and provided valuable insights into the evolving landscape of international education.

The field research component involved direct engagement with international students and stakeholders within higher education institutions. This phase consisted of focus group discussions, surveys, and interviews conducted across partner countries, namely Italy, Greece, and the Netherlands. The aim of the field research was to present the diverse perspectives and experiences related to international education, engaging with international students, educators, administrators, and support staff. Through qualitative data collection methods, such as open-ended interviews and thematic analysis, the field research uncovers insights into the challenges faced by international students, the efficacy of existing support services, and the potential areas for improvement within HEIs.

This research methodology ensured a comprehensive understanding of the international student landscape, informing the development of practical strategies and recommendations to enhance the educational experiences of international students and promote inclusivity within higher education institutions.

3.1 Desk Research

The initial phase of our desk research was an in-depth exploration involving an extensive examination of existing literature, reports, and academic papers specifically focusing on the inclusion of international students. The primary objective was to discern fundamental concepts, exemplary practices, and the most recent developments within this domain.

To achieve this, we applied:

- ▣ Thematic analysis; a methodological approach enabling the identification of key themes and patterns inherent in the findings derived from desk research.
- ▣ Through this systematic process, we successfully pinpointed significant trends prevalent in Higher Education concerning the inclusion of international students.

The outcomes of our comprehensive desk research culminated in the creation and publication of a report titled "Profiles of Inspiring Higher Education Institution International Learning Environments and



Academic Research Context." This report showcases commendable practices extracted from Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) across 7 European Union (EU) countries and 7 non-EU countries, providing valuable insights into the landscape of international student inclusion within diverse academic settings.

3.1.1. Brief presentation of the desk research results

The surge in the global significance of international students within higher education institutions is highlighted throughout the MODES desk research analysis. Central to this, is the exploration of 'connectedness,' encompassing social, cultural, political, place, and local dimensions. This proves particularly pertinent in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, emphasizing the need for a sense of belonging amidst unprecedented disruptions. Research highlights the imperative of continuous improvement in Higher Education services, offering tailored support, particularly through introductory courses, proves instrumental in aiding the integration of first-year international students to the academic environment and language.

The quality of teaching and support staff emerges as a significant influence on the international student learning environment. The 'International Competences Matrix,' developed at Hanze UAS, underscores the essential role of professional development for teaching staff in facilitating effective international education.

As far as mental health considerations are concerned, particularly underscored by the impact of COVID-19, the research emphasizes the challenges faced by international students, necessitating proactive and culturally informed support in higher education institutions worldwide, acknowledging and addressing the specific needs and experiences of international students during these challenging times.

During the desk research, we also identified 7 EU and 6 non-EU best practices:

| EU | Non-EU |
|---|--|
| FH Münster University of Applied Sciences (Germany) | University of Minho UMinho (Portugal) |
| Vilnius Gediminas Technical University (Lithuania) | Edinburgh Napier University (Scotland, United Kingdom) |
| Technological University of the Shannon (Ireland) | The State University of Campinas (Brazil) |
| Sapienza University of Rome (Italy) | Emory University (USA) |
| Georg-August-Universität Göttingen (Germany) | National University of Singapore (Singapore) |
| Delft University of Technology (Netherlands) | University of Melbourne (Australia) |
| University of Minho UMinho (Portugal) | |

For more information and the in-depth analysis of the desk research results you can visit the link [here](#).

3.2 Field Research

The field research phase consisted of focus groups with HEI staff and questionnaires distributed to international students. This approach allowed the collection of both qualitative and quantitative data, aiming to capture diverse perspectives and experiences related to inclusion.



Data was collected by Link Campus University (IT), Mitropolitiko College (GR), the University of Cyprus (CY), and the University of Leiden (NL). In total, we collected 65 questionnaires and we conducted 3 focus groups with the participation of 22 participants.

For the analysis of the results, we have used both thematic and quantitative analysis. We aim to map the needs, challenges, and preferences of Higher Education staff and the experiences, needs, and suggestions for improvement of international students, to support their smooth integration.

3.2.1. Brief Presentation of the field research results

This research project delves into the international student experience across three distinct countries: Italy, Greece, and the Netherlands. The study engages with higher education institutions (HEIs) in each locale, specifically focusing on Link Campus University (LCU) and Rome City Institute (RCI) in Italy, Metropolitan College in Greece, and international students in the Netherlands, particularly in Leiden.

- **ITALY - LCU:** The study involved nine participants from higher education institutions (HEIs) in Italy, including educators, psychologists, consultants, and administrative staff. It focused on the international student experience at Link Campus University (LCU) and Rome City Institute (RCI). During the focus group, the significance of services such as language lessons, community integration initiatives, personalized academic schedules, and peer-to-peer discussions for international students was emphasized. Participants underscored the necessity to incorporate job opportunities for international students and improve language exchange events and group excursions to foster community connection and cultural enrichment. The study unveiled various experiences in integrating international students over the past 5-7 years, shaped by the international presence of institutions and efforts to enhance community appeal and engagement. In conclusion, the research highlighted the imperative to advance discussions on bolstering support for international students, emphasizing the importance of this dialogue at multiple institutional levels.
- **GREECE - AKMI:** For the focus group under consideration, eight teachers, all from Metropolitan College, were actively involved. The research centered on exploring the international experience of students within their educational institutions. Participants conveyed a pressing need for broader support, particularly addressing external matters such as health services and administrative issues. Emphasizing the importance of an international student office, they deemed it a high-priority requirement. Regarding services facilitating smoother transitions, community services, mentoring programs, and personalized initiatives were ranked as paramount by the participants. Additionally, they proposed several supplementary services, including pre-departure orientation, cultural integration events, language support, financial assistance, and teacher training focused on cultural sensitivity.
- **NETHERLANDS - ULEI:** The results of the questionnaire administered to international students in the Netherlands revealed a diverse group of participants, primarily with an educational background at the undergraduate level. These students displayed a strong motivation for pursuing international



education, driven by goals such as seeking high-quality education and academic reputation, exposure to diverse cultures and perspectives, and personal growth. They placed significant importance on forming connections with other students, accessing language support, and receiving academic guidance. Career aspirations ranged from aspiring to become leading figures in their respective fields to acquiring specialized skills. While a substantial proportion expressed eagerness to participate in extracurricular activities, some noted a lack of prior opportunities. Notably, a significant portion of respondents showed high interest in intercultural experiences and learning about the host country's customs and traditions, highlighting their enthusiasm for a comprehensive international educational experience.

The *Final Report on Focus Groups Results* highlights several important findings related to international students' experiences and integration in higher education institutions, as the focus group results from Italy, Greece, and Leiden shed light on various aspects of international student life and the challenges they face.

The report reveals that universities and institutions have made efforts to improve the integration of international students. They offer a range of services, including orientation, mentorship programs, language lessons, and assistance with practical matters. However, the availability and effectiveness of these services vary, and there is room for improvement, particularly in providing support for students outside the university context.

The focus group discussions also emphasize the importance of addressing the specific needs of international students. In particular, issues related to gender and non-binary students are recognized as relevant and require greater awareness and sensitivity among staff. The report suggests the need for more gender-inclusive policies and accommodations, as well as support for non-binary individuals.

Furthermore, the report highlights the increasing importance of internationalization in higher education institutions, with universities actively working to attract and support international students. However, the integration and dropout rates of international students remain a concern in administrative discussions, and proactive measures are required to ensure their academic success.

In summary, the report provides valuable insights into the experiences of international students and the efforts made by institutions to improve their integration. It underscores the importance of addressing the specific needs of these students, including gender-related issues, and highlights the ongoing commitment to enhancing internationalization in higher education.

You can find more information on our field research results [here](#).

4. MODES concepts at the organizational level

In an international learning environment, several key concepts are paramount to enhance the educational experience: fostering a sense of connectedness, supporting staff capacity building, providing culturally sensitive services, addressing mental health, adjusting criteria for language and other barriers, and offering tailored introductory courses constitute fundamental elements.



During our research, we identified several key concepts and best practices for their implementation, which are described below. This chapter provides an exploration of best practices for enriching the international learning environment within higher education institutions (HEIs). The critical role of academic and non-academic support, staff capacity building, and a global perspective on internationalization has been underscored.

Additionally, the chapter introduces MODES concepts at an organizational level, advocating for practices such as supporting staff capacity building and delivering culturally sensitive services. Best practices identified include practical support services, student-to-student support through alumni networks, buddy systems, and peer-to-peer mentoring, along with initiatives like exchange programs and global activities. These practices, illustrated by institutions like Sapienza, Emory, VILNIUS TECH, and the University of Minho, collectively contribute to a holistic approach to creating an international learning environment.

The aim of this chapter is to highlight the best practices that could be implemented by organizations and HEIs to enhance the experiences of international students and facilitate the work of their staff.

For each best practice, we proceed with explaining the concept of the practice and offering real-life examples of its implementation. You can access the full description of the best practices [here](#).

4.1 Practical Support Services

Practical support services play a crucial role in facilitating the transition of international students into the academic environment. Examples of best practices include language preparatory courses, housing assistance, and comprehensive health and mental health services.

BEST PRACTICE

Sapienza International Student Service exemplifies a holistic approach by offering a range of services from application support to cultural activities, ensuring a seamless integration into university life.

4.2 Student-to-Student Support Services

4.2.1 Alumni Networks

Alumni networks play an important role in fostering enduring connections among graduates and strengthening the global footprint of educational institutions, as they provide a space for alumni to stay connected, share insights, and contribute to the collective growth of the community. These networks can take various forms, including online platforms, local chapters, and specialized groups based on shared experiences, academic disciplines, or career paths.

These networks benefit universities in many ways. Firstly, they serve as valuable resources for current students by offering networking opportunities, mentorship programs, and career guidance. Alumni, with



their diverse experiences can become mentors who can provide practical advice for navigating academic and professional landscapes. Additionally, active alumni engagement enhances the institution's reputation globally, the achievements of alumni in various fields reflect positively on the university, attracting prospective students, faculty, and collaborators.

BEST PRACTICES

Sapienza International Student Services: *Sapienza University's alumni association, NoiSapienza, focuses on building a positive force from the university. Through social and cultural activities, it aims to maintain relationships between members, facilitate the integration of new graduates into the workforce, and enhance the ideas of young graduates. The university keeps its alumni connected through events, reunions, and networking opportunities.*

Emory Alumni Association: *Emory University's alumni network is global, with over 149,000 alumni in 164 countries. The network, including international chapters, fosters engagement through various events, enabling alumni to remain connected. Emory's alumni have significantly contributed to diverse fields, including business, law, medicine, public service, academia, and the arts. The university provides career services, supporting alumni in their professional growth, and alumni contribute significantly to the university through philanthropic gifts, supporting scholarships, research, and facilities.*

4.2.2 Buddy System and Peer-to-Peer Mentoring

The buddy system, a form of peer-to-peer mentoring, is a support mechanism where experienced individuals guide newcomers through various aspects of university life. It can take different forms, such as formal mentorship programs, where assigned mentors provide structured guidance or informal setups where students connect organically based on shared interests or backgrounds. This system aims to facilitate the integration of new students, offering insights, practical advice, and emotional support.

Supporting the implementation of structured mentorship programs, HEIs can ensure that incoming students have a trusted source of assistance for navigating academic challenges, cultural adjustments, and daily life. At the same time, the buddy system contributes to a sense of belonging and community, fostering a supportive environment that positively impacts student retention and satisfaction.

BEST PRACTICE

Mentor at VILNIUS TECH: *VILNIUS TECH employs the Mentor initiative, a student volunteer program supporting international students. Mentors, who may have been Erasmus students or have international backgrounds, understand the challenges*



faced by international students and assist with integration into university life in Lithuania. Each incoming international student is assigned a mentor who offers insights, practical advice, and support. The Mentors are trained, and their proactive engagement begins approximately one month before the students' arrival. The program enhances the sense of community and aids international students in adjusting to both academic and daily life in a new environment.

4.3 Exchange Programs

Exchange programs enable students and staff to study or work in partner institutions, fostering international collaboration and skills development, aiming at providing participants with a global perspective, enhancing cross-cultural understanding, and promoting academic excellence through exposure to diverse learning environments. Based on our research, these programs can take various forms, including student exchanges, faculty exchanges, and collaborative research initiatives.

These initiatives contribute to the internationalization of the campus, creating a vibrant, multicultural atmosphere, and enriching the academic experience for both incoming and outgoing students. Students gain exposure to different teaching methodologies, research practices, and cultural nuances, broadening their perspectives. Faculty exchanges facilitate knowledge sharing and collaboration, leading to research advancements and the establishment of international academic networks.

BEST PRACTICES

Technological University of the Shannon (TUS): *TUS emphasizes international skills development through the RUN-EU European Mobility Innovation Centre. This center promotes innovative forms of student and staff mobility, combining traditional approaches with sustainable models. The EMIC brings together mobility experts to share expertise in international mobility. TUS's commitment to multiculturalism ensures the practical implementation of global mobility, fostering a dynamic international learning environment.*

Emory University: *Emory offers a comprehensive range of study abroad programs and international internships in over 45 countries. This not only allows students to engage with diverse cultures but also enriches their academic journey. Emory's emphasis on global exposure aligns with its commitment to producing graduates with a broad, international perspective, preparing them for success in an interconnected world.*

4.4 Global Activity

Global activity in the context of this toolkit, refers to a university's initiatives, partnerships, and collaborations on an international scale. Universities examined during our research, actively engage with



institutions worldwide, forming partnerships, participating in networks, and contributing to global discussions. This involvement reflects a commitment to internationalization, knowledge exchange, and the creation of a global community within academia.

At the same time they benefit, by expanding their reach, fostering cross-cultural collaboration, and enhancing their reputation on a global scale. Such engagement allows for joint research efforts, collaborative projects, and the sharing of resources and expertise.

BEST PRACTICES

University of Minho: *The University of Minho demonstrates a strong commitment to global engagement with partnerships involving over 400 universities worldwide. As a member of various international networks, including AULP, CEER, and CGU, the university actively contributes to discussions on sustainability, Euro-regional studies, and Portuguese-speaking universities. Through these alliances, the university fosters academic collaboration, cultural exchange, and joint initiatives that contribute to a global academic community.*

State University of Campinas: *The International Office at the State University of Campinas (Unicamp) plays a crucial role in fostering global connections. By strategically forming alliances, such as the collaboration with seven Argentine universities, Unicamp promotes the exchange of knowledge in diverse fields. Initiatives like the Latin American Studies Course (Celan) demonstrate a commitment to geopolitical unity, providing a platform for researchers, students, and teachers to engage in joint teaching, research, and extension activities.*

5. MODES concepts at professional level

The landscape of higher education demands a paradigm shift in the skill set of academic staff to meet the diverse needs of students in a globalized world. Traditional teaching methods are no longer sufficient, and educators must equip themselves with new skills to navigate the challenges and opportunities presented by internationalization. The importance of these new skills lies in their potential to enhance the overall learning experience for students, fostering a more inclusive and culturally aware educational environment. The acquisition of these skills is not only beneficial for students but also crucial for the continued relevance and competitiveness of higher education institutions on the global stage.

Our baseline study has revealed several notable trends in the current educational landscape that underscore the urgency of adopting new skills. The increasing number of international incoming students necessitates a pedagogical shift towards more inclusive and culturally sensitive teaching methodologies. Furthermore, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the integration of technology into education, emphasizing the need for educators to be adept at leveraging digital tools for effective teaching and communication. The research findings also highlight the importance of addressing



mental health challenges among international students, necessitating a more holistic and supportive approach from academic staff.

However, alongside these trends, significant challenges exist that must be addressed to ensure the successful implementation of these new skills. Resistance to change within academic institutions, limited resources for professional development, and the need for comprehensive support structures for international students pose substantial hurdles.

After analyzing our research's qualitative and quantitative data, we have concluded that a set of skills is necessary for higher education academic staff to adapt to current and future pedagogical trends.

The insights on these modules were derived from the desk research we conducted at the initial stage of the project and the field research. Data was collected by Link Campus University (IT), Mitropolitiko College (GR), the University of Cyprus (CY), and the University of Leiden (NL). In total, we collected 65 questionnaires, and we conducted 3 focus groups with the participation of 22 participants. For the analysis of the results, we have used both thematic and quantitative analysis.

Below, we present a summary of the main modules we have identified that could serve as the basis for *MODES International Skills Curriculum*. For each module, we present a short description of its aim and a list of possible subunits to be further elaborated and developed by the MODES partners.

Summary of the suggested modules:

| No | Name | Description | Subunits |
|----|--------------------------|--|--|
| 1 | Teaching with Enthusiasm | <p>The module focuses on instilling enthusiasm in teaching to create engaging and motivating learning environments.</p> <p>The aim of the module is to provide teachers with the necessary skills in order to captivate their learner's attention. This is a necessary set of skills, as often the cultural barriers and differences in program structures confuse and disengage international students.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☐ Strategies for Captivating Lectures: Main challenges in keeping the attention of young students and how to overcome them. ☐ Utilizing Multimedia and Technology: Best media to be used in the classroom and how to use them (e.g. Prezi, Mentimeter, YouTube, etc.) ☐ Dynamic Classroom Management Techniques: Incorporating non-formal learning techniques in teaching, promoting cooperation and teamwork in learning. |



| | | | |
|-----------------|---|---|--|
| <p>2</p> | <p>International-Mindedness & Flexibility</p> | <p>International mindedness is a key competency, emphasizing an awareness of global perspectives and a commitment to fostering intercultural understanding. Flexibility, at the same time, is crucial in adapting to diverse learning styles, cultural nuances, and unforeseen challenges inherent in international education.</p> <p>After the completion of this module, teachers should be able to identify cultural barriers and the best strategies to overcome them in the classroom and the evaluation of the students. Best practices and real-life examples are highly recommended to be presented for practice.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Intercultural Communication Skills & Navigating Cultural Sensitivities: Main considerations on intercultural communication, common mistakes, dos and don'ts. □ Integration of Global Perspectives in Teaching: Best practices outside the EU in teaching and how to adapt them in the EU HEIs realities. □ Building Inclusive Learning Spaces: Using inclusive language, creating safe spaces for students, practical considerations □ Adapting Teaching Methods to Diverse Learners: best practices and real-life examples □ Handling Unforeseen Challenges: common challenges and how to overcome them, behaviors, and attitudes in handling challenges in the classroom. □ Incorporating Flexibility in Assessment: Different types of assessment and how to implement them. |
| <p>3</p> | <p>Ability to Work with Language Learners</p> | <p>This module underscores the importance of effectively teaching students for whom the language of instruction is not their first language.</p> <p>Upon completion of this module, teachers should be able to adapt their courses to diverse language levels and support students pursuing academic</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Strategies for Language Support: Best practices for a multilingual classroom, how to prepare for a multilingual course. □ Building Language-Inclusive Classrooms: How to use |



| | | | |
|---|-------------------------------------|---|---|
| | | degrees and language learning simultaneously. It is highly recommended to provide tools and instructions on how to adapt to them within the classroom. | technology to facilitate your work in a multilingual environment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Encouraging Multilingual Collaboration: Exercises and tools to use with your students. □ Providing Effective Feedback for Language Development: how to provide effective feedback |
| 4 | Leading Extra-Curricular Activities | This module explores the role of educators in guiding and facilitating extracurricular activities that enhance the overall student experience. Based on our research, the provision of extracurricular activities and services highly impacts the integration and satisfaction of international students. The aim of this module is to provide guidance and methodologies to teachers, in order to be able to organize safe and inclusive extra-curricular activities with their international students. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Planning and Organizing Extracurricular Events: Special considerations for extracurricular activities, transportation, safety, choosing the right activities and places. □ Encouraging Student Initiatives □ Integrating Extracurricular Activities into the Curriculum: how to evaluate, assess and grade extracurricular activities |

6. Conclusions

In conclusion, Work Package 2 has gained valuable insights into the complexities of international education and the strategies employed by higher education institutions to support the diverse needs of international students. Through a combination of desk research and field research we have managed to collect and identify the challenges and opportunities associated with internationalization in higher education. The main findings revolve around fostering a sense of connectedness, providing tailored support services, and promoting cultural sensitivity within HEIs to enhance the international student experience.

Our research has highlighted the significance of practical support services, student-to-student support networks, and alumni engagement initiatives in facilitating the integration of international students into academic life. Best practices identified across institutions, such as language preparatory courses, mentorship programs, and exchange programs, could be adapted to creating inclusive learning



environments, while at the same time supporting teachers in developing the necessary skills and competencies to effectively engage with international students and navigate the complexities of cultural diversity.

7. Next steps

As the MODES Project finalizes its initial research phase and concludes with Work Package 2, we continue with developing the next project results: *A1: The Guide for International Learning Provision* and *A2: The International Skills Curriculum*. These documents aim to act as tools for higher education staff to provide more holistic and culturally sensitive services to international students

A1: The Guide for International Learning Provision

The project partners will develop a comprehensive Guide that presents and analyzes the identified innovative approaches in international learning provision. This Guide will not only present and analyze these approaches but will also serve as a roadmap for HEIs, outlining the steps for the integration of these methodologies in their operations.

A2: The International Skills Curriculum

The International Skills Curriculum comprises four modules designed to equip professors with the essential competencies for delivering classes to international students. The curriculum aims to cultivate skills such as teaching with enthusiasm, international-mindedness, flexibility, the ability to work with language learners, and leadership of extracurricular activities, to enhance the capabilities of educators, ensuring they can effectively engage with and support the diverse needs of an international student body.

By disseminating and piloting these tools in all partner countries, the project aims to support positive change within the higher education landscape, fostering inclusivity, innovation, and excellence in international education.