



COIL/VE Toolkit

Female Voices in the Third Space: Researching Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in South-North Collaborative Online International Learning-Virtual Exchange

British Academy – Leverhulme Funded Project
2023-2025



Marina Orsini-Jones, Jenny Wells, Kyria Finardi,
Katherine Wimpenny, Lynette Jacobs and Preeti Suri

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	4	5. Developing skills 2 - motivational and dialogue. ...	14
Introduction	4	6. Developing skills 3 - leading/leadership in a new field.	14
The toolkit - data	5	7. Developing Global Citizenship Education Competencies 1 - online facilitation.	14
Learning outcomes	6	8. Developing Global Citizenship Education Competencies 2 – learning a pedagogical approach “otherwise”/ transformational.	14
Inclusivity.....	6	9. Developing self-confidence and self-value - psychological and professional capital gain.	15
1. Pre -COIL/VE inclusivity insights and advice.....	7	10. COIL/VE professional value added - building networks, forging friendships and having female role models.	15
2. Setting up COIL/VE: materials and design	7	11. COIL/VE as a research development opportunity	15
3. COIL/VE in action	8	12. COIL/VE supports problem solving, innovation and collaborate on learning about the world	15
4. Post-COIL/VE Reflections	9	13. COIL/VE to support students’ professional and academic capital	15
Empowering	9	Final recommendations and conclusion	16
1. Pre -COIL/VE	9	Invest in Long-Term Planning and Relationship Building	16
2. Setting up COIL/VE: materials and design	9	Align COIL with Curriculum and Institutional Goals	16
3. COIL/VE in action	10	Guard COIL/VE activities in HE.....	16
4. Post-COIL/VE Reflections	10	Acknowledgements	16
Challenging	11	References.....	17
1. Pre -COIL/VE	11	Appendices	18
2. Setting up COIL/VE: materials and design	12	Appendix 1: Focus group questions	18
3. COIL/VE in action	12	Appendix 2: Individual Interview Questions	18
4. Post-COIL/VE Reflections	13		
Professional	13		
1. Professional capital – opportunity for learning and growth.	14		
2. Recommendation for institutional adoption.	14		
3. COIL/VE – a career changing experience.	14		
4. Developing skills 1 – digital.	14		

Table of Figures

Figure 1: Examples of COIL/VE types of modality.	4
Figure 2: A conceptual framework of Third Space COIL exchange (Wimpenny et al., 2022, p. 289).	5
Figure 3: Participating academic staff countries	5
Figure 4 : Question 13 in the JISC survey: How long have you been involved in COIL-VE for?	6
Figure 5: Edited top section of Figure 2 - Adapted conceptual framework of Third Space COIL exchange - following interviews with female students (Orsini-Jones et al., 2025, p. 248)	6

ISBN 978-1-84600-1345

CC BY-NC-SA 4.0

2025

Executive Summary

In this Toolkit we report on the data that emerged from our project *Female Voices in the Third Space - Researching Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in South-North Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL)/Virtual Exchange (VE)*, funded by a British Academy/Leverhulme grant. Our research findings illustrate that COIL/VE is a pedagogical approach that can have a positive transformational impact for women who experience it in Higher Education (HE) in terms of equity and equality. However, our results also show that COIL/VE can prove to be challenging and is not always easy to implement. This toolkit provides staff in HE with advice on why and how to implement South-North COIL/VE. The toolkit reports the lessons learnt on the COIL/VE experience from women in academia located in twenty two different countries. It illustrates that, in their view, COIL/VE can support the development of Global Citizenship education for peace, as advocated by UNESCO (2025).

Introduction

This toolkit aims to provide advice for Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL)/Virtual Exchange (VE) practitioners and researchers based on the outcomes of the project *Female Voices in the Third Space: Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in South-North Collaborative Online International Learning (Female Voices hereafter)*, funded by a British Academy/Leverhulme research grant (2023-2025).

The project investigates the evolving field of COIL/VE in Higher Education (HE) through a Global South-North research lens that it is distinctive for its focus on female voices. Leask (2020) defines COIL as "online learning in an international setting, with interactive involvement of students and faculty from different international and intercultural backgrounds in and outside the classroom" (p. 188). We use COIL and VE in conjunction and as equivalent terms in this report. Drawing from the definition of VE from the Evidence-Validated Online Learning through Virtual

Exchange (EVOLVE, 2025) project, we add to Leask's definition of COIL that VE is a pedagogical approach, underpinned by research,

"that consists of sustained, technology-enabled, people-to-people education programmes or activities in which constructive communication and interaction takes place between individuals or groups who are geographically separated and/or from different cultural backgrounds, with the support of educators or facilitators. Virtual Exchange combines the deep impact of intercultural dialogue and exchange with the broad reach of digital technology" (EVOLVE, 2025).

We also propose that COIL/VE is a challenging, fertile, fluid and liminal *Third Space* (Bhabha & Rutherford, 2006), that can foster intercultural dialogue and trigger transformational learning experiences.

COIL/VE is gaining traction as a sustainable and equitable approach to the development of Global Citizenship (GC) (e.g. Finardi & Aşık, 2024; Ortiz-Rojo, Finardi & Lacruz, 2025; Wimpenny, Jacobs, Dawson & Hegenmeier, 2024). Shabalala argues (2025) that GC education (GCE) is a strategy for social justice and there is evidence that COIL/VE can support the development of GC in HE (Helm, Baroni & Acconcia, 2024). COIL/VE facilitates GC development without the need to engage in physical travel, and is a way of implementing internationalisation at home (laH, Beelen & Jones, 2015). Beelen and Jones define laH as "the purposeful integration of international and intercultural dimensions into the formal and informal curriculum for all students within domestic learning environments" (p. 69).

We see COIL/VE as a postmodern approach in HE that allows for powerful intercultural knowledge-sharing, while also fostering the acquisition of transversal skills such as resilience, flexibility and respect for 'the other' (Orsini-Jones, et al., 2025). COIL/VE offers a multitude of modalities of exchange, with examples provided in Figure 1.

Number of partners (institution or professional)	One Partner	←→	Multiple
Number of interactions	One interaction	←→	Multiple activities
Approach to design of project	Collaborative (with a partner)	←→	Non-collaborative
Level	Undergraduate	←→	Postgraduate
Number of modules/ courses involved	One	←→	Multiple
Number of participants	Small number	←→	High number of participants
Type	Fully virtual	←→	Blended (e.g. including face to face interaction)
Use of platform/ tool	One	←→	Multiple
Location of participants	Location independent	←→	Location dependent (e.g. in the classroom)
Communication	Synchronous	←→	Asynchronous
Assessment	Formative	←→	Summative

Figure 1: Examples of COIL/VE types of modality.

Female Voices builds on work on COIL/VE we carried out together before. We are a team composed of women based in Brazil, South Africa and the UK (Wimpenny, Finardi, Orsini-Jones & Jacobs, 2022) and the starting point for the design of this toolkit was the conceptual framework of Third Space South-North COIL we designed (Wimpenny et al., 2022, p. 289), which drew from Leask and Bridge's (2013) conceptual framework for curriculum internationalisation in HE and is illustrated in Figure 2.

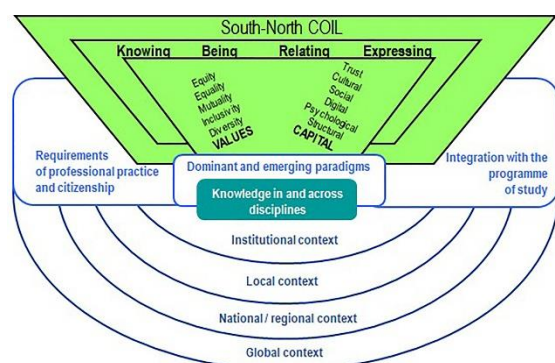


Figure 2: A conceptual framework of Third Space COIL exchange (Wimpenny et al., 2022, p. 289).

As we discussed in Orsini-Jones et al., (2025) “the conceptual framework illustrated in Figure 1 identifies an interconnected set of values, with a particular set of capitals, which give rise to how ways of knowing, being, relating and expressing not only might be questioned, contested and transformed in Third Space COIL, but also appreciated and celebrated. ‘Value’ is understood in terms of the worth and relevance of HE practices to student and staff development, associated with the promotion of education as a social good, emphasising the importance of inclusivity in the teaching, learning, and research missions of institutions (Brusoni et al., 2014). ‘Capital’ is used not only as an indication of class and wealth as in the original theorisation by Bourdieu (2006), but as a resource or potential to draw from.” (pp.)

Within the notion of COIL/VE as a Third Space for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) in HE, we appreciate the contextual inequalities that exist in collaborations between HE Institutions (HEIs) from the Global South and the Global North, such as inequalities in terms of funding opportunities, issues of language and infrastructure.

This Toolkit brings to light issues that arose from South-North COIL/VE exchanges, but also highlights and celebrates the positive and pluralised *knowledges-sharing* (with *knowledges* deliberately in the plural) they can generate.

The toolkit - data

This toolkit is based on the information gathered via:

1. The answers in the *Female Voices* enrolment online survey completed by 39 female staff from 22 different countries located in four different continents (see Figure 3), who had been involved in COIL projects. We used the [JISC online survey tool](#), which complies with the UK [General Data Protection Regulation legislation 2018](#). The survey included questions asking participants to provide their own definition of COIL/VE; to report on the challenges encountered when engaging with COIL/VE and to state what they valued most about their COIL/VE experience.
2. The feedback provided by female staff participants during a focus group held at Coventry University in March 2024, with 12 participants during the first dissemination conference for *Female Voices* (questions in Appendix 1).
3. The individual interviews with 34 female staff participants (questions in Appendix 2). The questions were distributed to participants before the interviews took place. Each interview lasted around 50 minutes and was analysed using the qualitative data analysis software [NVivo](#) (versions 14 and 15).



Figure 3: Participating academic staff countries

The degree courses the staff participants were involved with/taught on related to language education in the majority (64%), e.g.: BA English Language and Literature; BA Teaching English as a Foreign Language; MA in English Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics). Other subjects represented were: health, human resources, business studies, fashion, design, auditing and corporate governance, intercultural competence, leadership and psychology. Some of the participants were COIL/VE coordinators/leads in their institutions.

The majority of staff participants (72%, Figure 4) had engaged with COIL/VE for over 3 years.

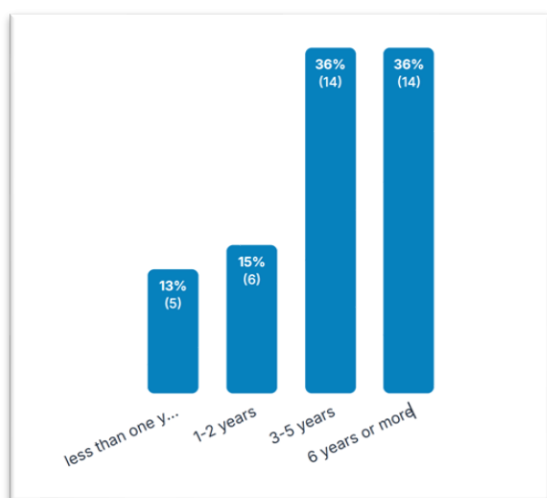


Figure 4 : Question 13 in the JISC survey: How long have you been involved in COIL-VE for?

We report on the themes and subthemes that crystallised from the analysis of data collected in this toolkit. We not only classified themes according to the initial conceptual framework in Figure 2 but also added additional themes which emerged. An amplified set of capitals and new terms had already emerged from the interviews carried out with students (results in Orsini-Jones et al., 2025), see Figure 5, where we illustrated the new themes that had emerged (Empowering, Innovative, Transformational, Challenging) as well as the added capitals: Linguistic and Agency/Autonomy. In this report we illustrate the most salient values/capitals and emerging themes that stemmed from the interviews with female academic staff.

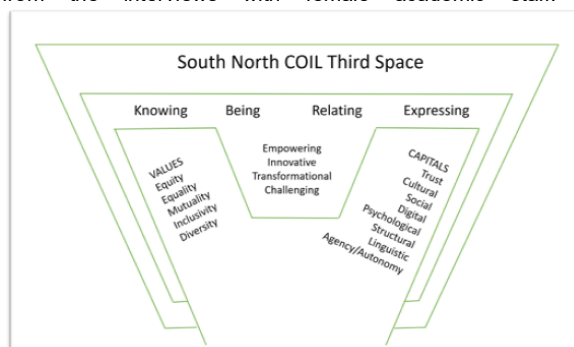


Figure 5: Edited top section of Figure 2 - Adapted conceptual framework of Third Space COIL exchange -

following interviews with female students (Orsini-Jones et al., 2025, p. 248)

Learning outcomes

This toolkit aims to support staff interested in implementing COIL/VE in their institutions and provides insights and advice based on the lived experiences of the female staff interviewed for *Female Voices*. The participating women's voices are reported via direct citations, to illustrate the themes, values and capitals that emerged, which enriched our initial conceptual framework and enhanced our understanding of South-North COIL/VE dynamics from the participating women's viewpoint.

There are numerous other guides and Toolkits on COIL/VE (e.g. Rubin & Guth, 2022; [iKUDU Evaluation Toolkit](#); [The VALIANT Virtual Exchange Manual](#)) but none of them, to our knowledge, is based entirely upon the reflections and contributions from women academic staff.

This toolkit focuses on the following four aspects which relate to the most cited values, capitals, and/or themes that emerged from the female academic staff voices, namely: **Empowering, Inclusivity, Challenging and Professional:**

- Identifying the **empowering** benefits of COIL/VE for female participants in the GS and the GN.
- Understanding how COIL/VE **can support inclusivity and equality** for female staff and students in HE.
- Acknowledging the **challenges** that can be encountered in COIL/VE exchanges, but also the positive impact they can have for women.
- Recognising the Global South (GS)- Global North (GN) **professional** gains that COIL/VE can provide women in academia.

We report below the advice and insights that emerged from the female voices for **Inclusivity, Empowering and Challenging** in relation to:

1. The preparation before the exchange starts (**pre-COIL/VE advice and insights**)
2. The setting up of a COIL/VE project (**setting up COIL/VE: materials and design advice and insights**)
3. The running of the exchange (**COIL/VE in action advice and insights**).
4. **Post COIL/VE reflections.**

We also summarise the points that emerged in relation to the **professional capital gains** that participants mentioned as the COIL/VE 'value added' for women engaging with it in their experience.

Inclusivity

In the words of the participants, the COIL/VE experience offered a **unique opportunity of intercultural learning and international connection** that suited women in particular, as they tend to have more family commitments than men (such as having to breastfeed their babies and/or care for their family). Participants – particularly those from the GS - also stressed that overseas travel can be very

prohibitive in financial terms and COIL/VE offers the opportunity to engage with the world from home. For many of them the COIL/VE experience was a 'first' in terms of international connection. For example, women in conflict zones highlighted how COIL/VE was the only opportunity they had had to engage with the world outside their war-torn country.

1. Pre -COIL/VE inclusivity insights and advice

I1.1 Recognise and maximise COIL/VE 'firsts' such as the opportunity to interact internationally, previously not available to them due to travel costs, family responsibilities and commitments, war. 'Bring women in', e.g.:

I1.1.1. *I can say that especially the girls, the female students studying at Gaza University may not have that chance to go abroad a lot. So this may give them the experience of experiencing other cultures where they will never, ever be encountered for, you know, be in Brazil or Saudi Arabia or so on. (GS)*

I1.1.2 *There's that sense of being able to contribute somehow you know, to making higher education a more inclusive and a more diverse place, (GN)*

I1.1.3 *And I think it's also something that it's to show them that it's actually possible to create an online world which is equitable, which is inclusive, which is tolerant. (GN)*

I1.1.4 *COIL/VE gave us mutual enrichment first because we really wanted our students to embed in their own learning and teaching the idea that the global learning, the idea of world as a global place, not necessarily as regions of the world that are more powerful than others (GN)*

I1.1.5 *But in fact we all have the same problems. Employment, gender issues, issues in climate change and for students it was, it was like a surprise that, oh, we also maybe have similar problems during our studies and you (in the GN) have trouble with [...] resources [...]. So their conclusion was that people, young people all over the world they experience similar problems. So we might find the same solution why not? So it was really an interesting outcome. (GS)*

I1.2: Engage with female voices from countries/institutions with different ways of knowing and doing than your own.

I1.2.1 *I've been working more and more with female colleagues, in particular from Brazil, because I want to more systematically bring ways of knowing and doing so that its epistemologies and educational VE practices from the global S to the field of COIL and critical VE as a whole. I feel VE has great potential to provide a safe space for marginalised women by offering access, flexibility and understanding. It's about amplifying, marginalised voices. (GN)*

I1.3: Utilise COIL/VE as it makes women feel their voice matters

I1.3.1 *And one of the comments that came from one of my students is that this type of projects makes us (women) feel important. And they really love that, like there is a word for me important, but because of the context my students said it [...] they feel included.[...] I (myself) do feel included. [...]*

And a lot of women are involved, and I was very happy to see many women in charge. (GS)

2. Setting up COIL/VE: materials and design

I2.1 When choosing topics, give consideration to those of particular interest to a female audience, e.g.:

I2.1.1 *I think maybe you know this is an opportunity to create like safe space, safe communities where you can express yourself on a number of topics, or things that you've experienced yourself and which is a bit like maybe taboo in academia (GN)*

I2.2 Do not shy away from topics that might be emotive or challenging, but negotiate this with partners first to ascertain that this is feasible and ethical in each of the country contexts involved, e.g.:

I2.2.1 *When we did a COIL with Polish students. And for me, this is a freedom of speech when they can choose the topic that they want to share with others. For example, they talked about protest against abortion. As you remember, they were a lot in Warsaw. So they talked about this as an issue because the topic of the COIL was time capsule and what they want to do like to pass that they would do their children and they set the freedom of choice and freedom of speech they want to pass. So if you encourage young women to share the message that they want to share, they are willing to participate. (GS)*

I2.3 Collaborate with partners on inclusive design and inclusive communication

I2.3.1 *I think the work done to, you know, to encourage people how are you going to talk to each other? The sort of politeness, what the ground rules of your COIL are. I think if they're established well then you can make, you can support that inclusion. Learning to facilitate dialogue and teaching students how they can best represent themselves using various digital tools, how that is different from in person interactions and how they actually can understand, make that space for others. So that they're not judgmental, they just listen openly and respect each other but also when there are conflicts manage or transform the conflict into, into something more productive. It is very difficult. It's something I guess as VE organizers, we need to keep improving as well. There must be material, but with the busy academic life is very difficult to find the right material [...] the careful thought for design is so important, and the partners are showing respect, show their respect, show their curiosity and that and that gesture can, it's a great invitation for them to participate in this space, to open up their self, to and to tell them that their perspective are valued. Certainly prioritising equity design is the foremost. (GN)*

I2.4 Include the adjustments needed for disabled/neurodivergent people in the COIL/VE project and materials design

I2.4.1 *Accessibility in COIL/VE cannot be seen as only relating to technological compliance and technical checklists. Universal Design for Learning (UDL) 3.0 guidelines and a justice-oriented approach to curricular accessibility must be utilised in conjunction with technical specifications. A fully inclusive COIL/VE learning*

environment must be designed to make room for multiple forms of engagement, representation, and expression. (GS)

12.5 Prioritise equity design – e.g. Internet access, time zones, language diversity

12.5.1 Certainly prioritise equity design [...] So it's all about making sure that everyone could be included no matter what the challenge is. Important like consider Internet access time zone and the language diversity. So I don't believe that COIL projects in and of themselves just innately are inclusive. I believe that we should always critically invite difference and design for difference to be part of the learning. So first, you need to recognise otherness, and then you need to also embrace the idea that otherness is not a risk or scary or a threat. So, how can we embrace that and make space for everybody? And this is not easy. (GN)

12.5.2 Facilitate inclusion through elements of design – introductions, ground rules and mediating dialogue. Fostering respect, designing for difference and embracing otherness.

12.5.2.1 I think that the introduction helps a lot. We've been also part of many Padlets presentations before so that helps a lot, like at least your photograph is going to be there they're going to read from you and get to know you because at the end of the day they're going to become classmates. (GS)

3. COIL/VE in action

13.1 Exploit technology – be familiar with the features of your chosen platform and encourage female participants to use them

13.1.1 So it does exclude people as well, but if they don't have access to this technology in this infrastructure around the digital. Sometimes in a (face-to-face) classroom the XXXX males tend to dominate the discussion in class, so the female XXXXX students may be a little bit more subdued. I should say but online I find that they are more confident to express their opinion because they have the opportunity to use the chat function as well. If someone monopolises the conversation, write something in the chat. If it's not highlighted, put your hand up, you know, just try and give them examples of how to overcome those issues. Digital capital enables opportunity for better inclusion and diversity. (GN)

13.2 Recognise the uniqueness of each student and facilitate the opportunity for them to show who they are.

13.2.1 I think they value the opportunity to show their realities as well. Show who they are, where they live. Make student feel that their view and their perspective are represented, their culture is represented in this space. I mean COIL is also real life but in face to face interaction some women in some countries cannot speak their voices, but in COIL they do. So I think it's already an inclusive space. (GN)

13.3 Respect different ways of engagement and presence in the online environment – intercultural awareness

13.3.1 For students who come from different religious backgrounds, for those who don't want to show their face, it's okay to turn off their camera and still participate. You

don't have to have that identity. You don't, if the women are not comfortable (ask them) to participate with camera on. (GN)

13.3.2 In Abu Dhabi, for instance, it's a matter of culture. I mean, if we ask them to open their cameras they would refuse to participate, and we wanted them to participate. (GS)

13.3.3 So there was this one student who had an introductory post on Padlet and got a picture of herself in front of a kind of historic monument in the city. And she covered her face with some kind of emojis so you couldn't see her face. And then in her reflection she talks about the fact that she's aware that she feels closer to other people, to other participants and she can understand their identities better if they show their faces. She's aware of what she's missing out, but she's also aware of how to use (the virtual space) and what she needs to do to be able to still participate without necessarily blocking out all of it. So, she still has a space to participate but has to (digitally) edit it. (GN)

13.4: COIL/VE facilitates the creation of a digital safe space for women – one that is equitable, free from judgement and built on trust, where they can express themselves.

13.4.1 This is a safe environment. Yeah, nobody's opinion is more superior to anybody else's, you know [...]. And whatever we say in our COIL stays within that environment. That's what I always say. So that's to me, it's openness, frankness [GN]

13.4.2 There was one student [...] who was really different in the (face-to-face) classroom. She was quite shy and wasn't confident with her English but had the best experience ever after VE given how different the experience was. So I think the value for me is to be able to better understand my own students. The quiet ones really excel, I think, in the online environment, Yeah, which is quite interesting. I like, I like to see that we have the opportunity that they've got more opportunity to express their opinion rather than being shut down. I think, so the the dynamic completely shifts when it goes online because it gives greater opportunity for everyone to voice their opinion. (GN)

13.4.3 So I think (COIL/VE) also makes others feel important because they feel included. And this is a wonderful chance for everyone to participate and, and to get to know, not more, because this is something I always mentioned. Not other countries, not other cities, no other states, but other minds, other people. (GS)

13.4.4 Sometimes in a classroom the XXXXGSCountry males tend to dominate the discussion in class, so the female XXXXGSCountry students may be a little bit more subdued. But online I find that they are more confident to express their opinion. (GN)

13.4.5 If someone monopolises the oral conversation, students can write something in the chat. If it's not highlighted, students can put their hand up, you know, just try and give them examples of how to overcome communication issues. Digital capital enables opportunity for better inclusion and diversity and (enables female students) to persist in trying to find out more about one another. (GN)

13.5 Importance of competent online facilitators/mediators in breakout rooms to facilitate inclusion

13.5.1 *You need) to be patient, not to be so ambitious. Also to listen, actually, to listen to student, not to convince them follow your ideas. But to follow theirs.*

I felt that it was my voice was not fully included in the conversation. The facilitators didn't necessarily do a good job you know, validating my voice, I got emotional right like and I was basically talking about my experience. And I think the facilitators either got overwhelmed or they were really not sure what to do and how to validate those difficult emotions. So they basically what they did is they moved to someone else or like they moved to discuss a different point of view. (GS)

13.5.2 *A lots of girls, for instance, they have their cameras off, or they don't like to show their faces [...] because they are practising Muslims. [...] Even if that happens, you could still find a way to encourage their voices, because if they're not showing their faces, this doesn't mean that they cannot really share their voices. (GS)*

4. Post-COIL/VE Reflections

14.1 COIL/VE fosters inclusion as a female academic – benefit from the association with an international, female community of practice.

I am really happy to be part of VE projects as a female academic because it made me feel more included. And also I belong to a female community working on this topic. I'm observing that there's a male community supporting each other in academic world, for example, in our society, but usually female academics do not belong in that community and I was happy when I worked with other female colleagues from other countries that support each other a lot. (GS)

14.2 COIL/VE broadens the worldview of the staff involved, makes them step out of their comfort zone, fosters connections and their understanding of diversity

From my COIL/VE experience, what I value most is the opportunity it provides for authentic cross-cultural exchange and collaboration. Engaging in COIL/VE allows me to interact with peers from different parts of the world, gaining insights into their perspectives, experiences, and cultural contexts. This exposure not only enriches my understanding of diverse cultures but also broadens my worldview and enhances my ability to communicate and collaborate effectively across cultural boundaries. Additionally, COIL/VE encourages me to step out of my comfort zone, challenge my assumptions, and embrace cultural diversity, fostering personal growth and development. The connections and friendships formed through COIL/VE extend beyond the virtual classroom, creating a global network of peers and collaborators with whom I can continue to learn and grow. (GN)

Empowering

Empowerment for women through COIL/VE emerged as a significant theme in the data from both the GS and the GN and reflected the results from the female students' interviews (see Figure 5, Orsini-Jones et al., 2025), where it had surfaced as one of the key themes too. The advice and insights for this new theme are reported below.

1. Pre -COIL/VE

E1.1 Women feel empowered in COIL/VE, they find their voice

E1.1.1 *So for me, it empowers me a lot with my female voice. I could say, I know that I can speak and [...] I have something to say, you know. And nowadays [...] I can have the opportunity to speak without having a fear of being silenced, because I've been silenced here at the university by male colleagues and by people in a different position of power. (GN)*

E1.2 COIL/VE gives women the opportunity to become empowered via 'internationalisation at home' knowledge-sharing transformational experiences

E1.2.1 *And I think it's also these VE experiences increased my networking as a female academic. And I can see that especially we built a kind of nice community around VE and nearly all of them the, you know, academics that I have worked with are female. And now, for example, I am kind of VE ambassador at university, talking everywhere how VE changed my life (GS)*

E1.2.2 *As a as a professional who is passionate about VE actually, that's what drives me. I really want to make sure that women and females from different backgrounds and minorities and different, you know, cultural backgrounds really know that this is a great space to show your voice and to be proud of it. (GS)*

2. Setting up COIL/VE: materials and design

E2.1 Choose topics that are close to women's interests and empower female voices

E2.1.1 [...] *as I said, like I think it's very important to empower female voices in all topics in all sensitive topics and especially when it comes to politics for instance [...] or topics where like males or men usually take over the conversation. (GS)*

E2.2 Consider topics, boundaries, power dynamics (language used, teacher/student) and ethical ground rules to empower the female voice(s)/the female students.

E2.2.1 *Sometimes they there are some things that they don't share with their parents and teachers, they can share only with peers and they feel empowered in COIL/VE and it requires much time and much efforts, because we have to create really safe environment for students. (GS)*

E2.2.2 *That also involves assurance that the interactions aren't recorded by the participants, they won't be released elsewhere. So the ethics and data protection and that joint trust is really important, I think, to empower women more and to make sure they are more included. (GN)*

E2.2.3 *I think in VE it's really crucial to set up a safe space and to work on it together in different ways so that the safe space can then pave the way for brave interaction. (GN)*

E2.3 COIL/VE can empower marginalised staff and students through powerful exchanges that boost their self-esteem

E2.3 .1 We are experiencing this, you know like our background, that we were behind all these countries and we have to now do something more just to be like[...] European people and our self-esteem level is very low. And we think that XXXXXX, they are like, you know, I don't want to say this, but some students really feel like that, that we are second, second type people, you mean comparing to Europeans. But due to this collaborative project, they just try to eliminate this conception and perception of themselves as a people of a different sort (inferior people). (GS)

3. COIL/VE in action

E3.1 Foster women collegiality and equality - Feeling empowered by being treated like an equal

E3.1 .1 I can be myself. And I can do something with another partner and then we have this time for, for connecting, for talking about. OK, how was this project went for you or? OK can you change this? Can we do this? And we have equal rights to speak. I met a lot of women that, they are really good at what they do and I think I don't have as much experience as many others, but I never feel different. They never, they never say for example, OK, I've been doing this for, I don't know or my grade is this we don't do this and it's something amazing for me because I feel I feel valued. (GN)

E3.2 Tend the COIL space to liberate and amplify the female voices; both the individual and the collective.

E3.2.1 What our students appreciate this is a level of freedom we really can do what we want, yes, and we can choose any platform, any resources [...]. Like, for instance, when I see female students in projects, you know, mention and talk about some sort of topics about their personal experiences. It's kind of it kind of affirms the importance to do that. (GS)

E3.2.2 I think we should definitely encourage students to bring in their own stories to bring in their own interests and to make space for that. Like not everything is tasks that they need to finish or project, or even if our time is very limited, we should find creative ways for students to allocate time and space for such conversations. (GS)

E3.3 Facilitate empowerment and constructive approaches to difference between student peers

E3.3.1 And [...] even if people do not agree with you, that's okay. We do not agree with each other all the time and it's okay they think it is the richest part of the collaboration but being in a safe and comfortable place for you to expose your ideas, respect, present another point of view. It is grabbing that space for empowerment to be able to lead to be able to hold your own space to feel that that space is safe. (GS)

E3.3.2 Sometimes they there are some things that they don't share with their parents and teachers, they can share only with peers and they feel empowered and it requires much time and much efforts, because we have to create a really safe environment for students. (GS)

E3.3.3 (Empowerment) also involves assurance that the interactions aren't recorded, they won't be released elsewhere. So the ethics and data protection and that joint trust is really important, I think, to empower women more and to make sure they are more included. It's a space for students to negotiate, can take in many forms like resistance, perseverance and negotiation of power, language and identity. (GN)

E3.4 Encourage exchange and dialogue on societal and cultural 'norms' in different contexts

E3.4 .1 But for that particular project, it was nice to see girls basically showcasing their pride of being housewives or like, you know, like they they've seen their moms and their aunts and it was interesting because I think it was something that other students still did not buy in, and you could tell. But what I appreciated is that those two girls in particular and they were coming from the countryside, they were actually bringing in a new idea of what it means to be a housewife. And like, there's no shame to be a housewife if a woman chooses to be that. (GS)

4. Post-COIL/VE Reflections

E4.1 Empower for working lives beyond the classroom: female networks, professional development and CVs (this also links to the professional theme)

E4.1 .1 I think VE can pave the foundation for them to build their own network and someday one day, they may have their own business and their dedicated business to social change. (GN)

E4.1.2 It's been very empowering because I've tended to work almost exclusively with women, and we've built networks together where we're not just colleagues, but we've become really, really good friends. (GN)

So for me it's been empowering. I've gained a lot of support from women in Poland, Argentina, South Africa. (GN)

E4.1.3 In different perspectives and it was very enriching and for me it's for sure, professional, growth and professional development in such an alternative way, not just attending some workshops or conferences. (GS)

E4.1.4 I think that the way that you deal with this, the way that you work with other people, being open to that you know, it is incredible. COIL for me, it was and it is a wonderful opportunity to get to know and work with people from many different contexts and cultures (GS)

E4.1.5 And I think it's also these VE experiences increased my networking as a female academic. And I can see that especially we built a kind of nice community around VE and nearly all of them the, you know, academics that I have worked with are female. (GS)

E4.1.6 So I am really happy to be part of VE projects as a female academic because it made me feel more included. And also I belong to a female community working on this topic. I really love this. (GS)

E4.1.7 I only understood after, I don't know, like seven VEs, that this experience could be used by them (my female students) in resumes, curricula. Actually, [I realised this] after my student applied for the Fulbright programme and she included this experience in her motivational letter. And this is a big, actually a big advantage, because as teachers

we take something like this for granted, like out next COIL, but for them it is really a first step in something (novel). (GS)

Challenging

We have discussed before the **challenging nature** of an approach that takes both staff and students 'out of the comfort zone' of the face-to-face learning and teaching experience they are used to in HE (Wimpenny & Orsini-Jones, 2020; Orsini-Jones & Finardi, 2024). The testimonials collected here illustrate the many facets of this challenge, for women in academia in particular, even if many are generalisable to all staff involved in COIL/VE. What the testimonials demonstrate however is also the **positive impact that a transformational challenge can have for women. Also, it was interesting to see that staff in the GN saw challenges in a negative light, while staff in the GS saw challenges as opportunities for their students to learn how to address them beyond academia**

1. Pre -COIL/VE

C1.1 It is challenging – but a rewarding challenge, teaching staff to learn to challenge themselves – fun element

C1.1.1 *(It involves) a lot of challenges but also a lot of opportunities. We are here to learn how to dialogue with each other and the challenging part makes it even more rewarding. Sometimes we may not know what kind of resources are needed until, until we are, we have the opportunity to interact[...]I think it's also a space where teaching, teaching and learning habits are challenged somehow. (GN)*

C1.1.2 *I would say it's a lot of work, but it's fun and you will learn and I think that the partners are very important. (GS)*

C1.2 It requires a considerable amount of preparation, inclusive intercultural dialogue and flexibility

C1.2.1 *So it requires a lot of preparation, ongoing dialogue and support to make sure everyone feel heard. So it's experiential. It's collaborative. It's intercultural, which is challenging. (It presents) exploration challenges and especially unforeseen challenges. (GN)*

C1.2.2 *You should be ready [...] there will be some misunderstanding, some issues of force majeure. So this is a part of the project. So [...] if a person would like to conduct or be a part of the COIL, this person should be open and prepared for anything. (GS)*

C1.3 Workload concerns, lack of recognition of the workload needed, unequal workloads

C1.3.1 *I know for example my colleagues didn't want to get involved because it requires a lot of work. (GS)*

C1.3.2 *And I hope in the future, VE at my university will be recognised more so that my work will be seen more. But I'm sure in five years they will understand OK the benefits of VE and they will understand how, you know, I struggled because it needs a lot of teacher workload. (GS)*

C1.3.3 *It takes a lot of effort, of thinking about that a year before and afterwards. And so sometimes it's just like "I haven't got time for this" I can understand why my (male) colleagues say "No". (GN)*

C1.3.4 *COIL is linked to global engagement and in this area [...] the percentage of female staff is significant: 90%.*

Maybe the males are looking at it from a more of a black and white point of view in terms of "what would I get in return for all this preparation" because, as you know, COILs are very time intensive. So what does he get from it? And also, male colleagues ask "what do the students get from it?". We (female staff) work very hard, very hard at doing this ourselves, so we spend, I've spent a lot of time far beyond my workload that I'm paid for. (GN)

C1.3.5 *Prepare to work with students before the COIL, it's also an important part and you have to find time for this because, in our case, it's absolutely not paid. It is just my personal wish. And you have to be devoted to it. Really, because it really takes much time and then managing all these things. So be ready for this extra load. (GS)*

C1.4 Unpredictable changing socio-political circumstances can negatively impact on existing partnerships

C1.4.1 *And well, I do notice that the perspective on CountryX over the last 5 years has dramatically changed. Where in the beginning students would be excited about having these collaborations with CountryX, now [...] we even get questions from parents and some people have all kinds of security gadgets involved because you're communicating online and "We're not giving our data to CountryX". (GN)*

C1.5 Unexpected logistics planning issues can occur and disrupt the exchange

C1.5.1 *We originally agreed this is the programme, those are the dates and then just one week before, one partner, all of a sudden, says their students need to be away, so we have to come up with something very quickly. (GN)*

C1.6 Some partners/institutions prefer to discuss the exchange with male staff/male staff can 'mansplain' and belittle women

C1.6.1 *I had a very, not bad experience, but difficult, tricky experience with one specific partner who would prefer to discuss things with male colleagueX, even if X and I work together. (GS)*

C1.6.2 *As uncomfortable as it may be, I remember he was mansplaining me when we did things together online with our groups there. And when we did synchronous things, he interrupted me and started explaining my own words to my class and to me. And I remember the girls in the class looking at me like how will she be because they knew I was a feminist, looking at me for my reaction. And I was wondering like, OK, I don't want to cause this man to lose face. In front of his students, but he's making me lose face in front of my students and how to navigate this. (GN)*

C1.7 Inform students that challenges and conflicts arising from the exchange can be beneficial as they reflect real life situations and support the development of negotiation skills useful for the world of work

C1.7.1 *Always before the start, I tell my students that they will benefit the most from the COIL if they experience conflict in their group, because if everything is like, smooth, perfect, you do not benefit. If you have conflicts or misunderstandings you will develop new skills and it is*

going to be easier for you to apply all those skills in real work situation. So actually this is a benefit of a VE and a COIL conflict, healthy conflicts (GS)

2. Setting up COIL/VE: materials and design

C2.1 Lack of infrastructure (technical and other) can hinder COIL/VE exchanges and increase inequality

C2.1.1 *Again, it's my university, because I didn't have any digital resources. I used my own resources. So this was the basic, you know, let's say lack of resources that I felt not equal, unequal. (GS)*

C2.1.2 *We were in the room, the computers didn't work, people were late, you name it, it was all going wrong. (GN).*

C2.2 Embedding assessment in COIL/VE is challenging.

C2.2.1 *Anything to do with assessment has to be done, you know, pretty much a year in advance. And so that makes it really hard to embed assessment into COIL. Which is why COIL is not linked to any of our assessments. (GN)*

C2.3 Technical issues will occur: the COIL/VE practitioner must be resilient.

C2.3.1 *But it's always challenging because we rely on technology so much and often things go wrong. And we have to be flexible and adaptable about that I think and resilient, a lot of resilience. (GN)*

C2.4 Synchronous COIL/VE sessions present logistics challenges – e.g. different time zones - and must be planned carefully.

C2.4.1 *The, the more difficult thing was having time zone specific for the synchronous collaboration. (GS)*

C2.4.2 *We have greater difficulties when we get guest speakers to come into the COIL because the guest speakers aren't necessarily in either of the countries where we are. So they're coming in on teams. So we had the COIL in November just gone. We had me in the UK, XXXX in Germany. Then we had a guest speaker from XXXX and the other guest speaker was in Abu Dhabi in the Middle East. So those time differences were quite interesting to work out. But it went well in the end. (GN)*

C2.5 Accessibility challenge: need to choose accessible and compatible media and should not overlook accessibility issues in terms of access for disabled/neurodivergent participants

C2.5.1 *Accessibility in COIL/VE cannot be seen as only relating to technological compliance and technical checklists. Universal Design for Learning (UDL) 3.0 guidelines and a justice-oriented approach to curricular accessibility must be utilised in conjunction with technical specifications. A fully inclusive COIL/VE learning environment must be designed to make room for multiple forms of engagement, representation, and expression. (GS) (also quoted in inclusivity)*

C2.5.2 *We completely overlooked the fact that our partners in country XXX could not access tool XXX, which we had set up for sharing materials asynchronously. (GN)*

3. COIL/VE in action

C3.1 Managing power relations in a sensitive way can be challenging – intercultural awareness of unconscious bias against GS needs to be developed by the tutors based in the GN

C3.1.1 *But there is a power game, some of what we had when we had a COIL with students from the XXXGN country. Because, I didn't know, maybe their mentality or perhaps because it was our second COIL and we didn't prepare students in a proper way, but I really felt it, and (my) students told (me) that (there was) this sense of the 'Super', that they are a better country, they are a more powerful country and it was not verbal, but it was like on the level of emotion and feelings. (GS)*

C3.1.2 *I felt that it was my voice was not fully included in the conversation. The (GN) facilitators didn't necessarily do a good job you know, validating my voice (GS)*

C3.4. Ground rules need to be set around communication and dialogue in the COIL space

C3.4.1 *One of the most important values that I'm trying to develop is that online exchanges do not need to be polarised. I mean we can still have a decent conversation without getting at each other's throats and sometimes I've noticed that students are struggling with that as well. So in terms of how we can better design, maybe We need to set those communication parameters. [...] The rules around dialogue and openness and listening and understanding each other [...] if we include that as part of the first task, we can get students to reflect on how they communicate. What kind of things that stop them to take the floor and how they can, they encourage others to take the floor better, how they can encourage each other to have a voice. So, a bit of a reflection, a bit of thinking and setting the ground rules before we start off might help for those who feel that they're not being listened to as much [...] (we need to engage them in) a reflection at the beginning and at the end. (GN)*

C3.5 It can be challenging to get 'buy in' from students: selling the benefits of the COIL experience and working with them to stay the course.

C3.5.1 *It's also difficult for academics to make students understand why they should do it. Because I think students don't initially see the benefit, they always ask "why are we doing this?" (GN)*

C3.5.2 *It's a new setting. It's a 3rd space. So they are out of their comfort zone. [...]I would say we also have less to lose than them, (if it is assessed) they lose their credits and so they are more stressed in a way because they are out of their normal comfort zone (GN)*

C3.5.3 *Our students tend to go into all these COILs and be very polite to start with [...] then they realise there is a deadline to hit. They can't hit the deadline, they get frustrated and then rather than confronting their peers on the other side of the world, what I have seen is quiet quitting. That they withdraw their input and that for me is, you know, is the silence of the withdrawal. (GN)*

C3.6 You need to manage challenging situations (e.g. in conflict zones): be flexible and give your students autonomy and flexibility within the

constraints of resources and local working conditions.

C3.6.1 *I listen to students and give them freedom of choice, for example, we have blackouts right now in Ukraine and like, sometimes it's really impossible for them to connect so I just believe them, that the situation is as they describe it. The second problem is like for example, cameras. Sometimes students can't turn on the cameras because they are connecting from home [...] We know nothing about their families and their current situation in person. (GS)*

C3.7 COIL/VE helps you with reviewing your conceptualisation of 'control of the learning environment' and your objective setting.

C3.7.1 *It's dealing with that uncertainty, and that we do not always have an objective. I mean this is something that I'm really struggling with as well in any VE or COIL project, and it's like, you know that idea of being able to reach certain outcomes, certain objectives, and sometimes that is not possible in COIL. I mean it's, that's the beauty of it as well, because it opens up like a world of possibilities, in my opinion. (GN).*

C3.7.2 *I think what is sometimes challenging and is that idea of control for me is key for example with students, I think sometimes people don't realise how much work you have to put in it to make it work and trying to find some sort of a balance between controlling too much what is happening and letting go. (GN)*

C3.7.3 *(COIL/VE) supports teaching to transgress and to dare to go into issues that really matter to us as citizens (GN)*

C3.7.4 *It really shows you how learners can do their best to kind of engineer their own experience. And sometimes you know they are very successful, other times they're not very successful. But I think what was really interesting to see was their ability to cope and you know, to basically learn with one another and learn from each other as well. (GS)*

C3.7.5 *A lot of things that can happen in virtual exchange, I think even the unexpected and that's why I personally like to use the word 'space' or [...] refer to it as 'learning space' because you know, as instructors we always have expectations. We always have goals. We always have objectives that we would like to achieve. You know with our task design, with our assessment, etcetera. But there's always the unexpected part that really happens that we need to make room for. Whether it's misunderstanding or tension, or it could be, you know, students understanding tasks in a different way. (GS)*

C3.8 For exchanges involving countries situated in conflict zones, tutors and mediators will need training on how to deal with emotions and trauma caused by knowledge-sharing of traumatic realities that some of the partners are not fully acquainted with.

C3.8.1 *So they didn't expect that level of war reality, which our students shared, and I understand that students [in the partner country in the GN] found it traumatic [...] We have to think about it with instructors, and now I have some preliminary session with our partners, with instructors, with students. I just suggest to them some tips on how to behave, what questions to ask, be ready if you don't feel comfortable [...] if it impacts your emotional state, consult your instructor. [...] Also I will prepare our students on what*

you can share what is better not to share. Even if you want to. (GS)

C3.8.2 *But our students, you know, they think that it is OK for everyone (to see these pictures). (Our Students) said, "we know that students from other countries, they read newspaper but they can find all these pictures and open resources using Internet and social net. So why are they so emotionally weak?". And I have to explain that they're not weak. It's just some, you know this psychological trauma. [...] nobody taught me how to implement trauma informed strategies. [...] And now I have to gain professional growth (in this field). (GS)*

C3.8.3 *I got emotional and I was basically talking about my experience. And I think the facilitators either got overwhelmed or they were really not sure what to do and how to validate those difficult emotions. So basically what they did was to move to someone else or they moved to discuss a different point of view. (GS)*

C3.9 Keeping reflective journals can minimise the re-occurrence of challenging issues

We kept some journals while we were doing the VE projects. And while keeping those journals, I realised that for example, I didn't, I forgot to inform my partner about some special holidays in XXXX and they had no idea about them. So later I had to explain. So keeping journals or keeping some kind of reflection on the process, I'm sure will increase this awareness more rather than just doing the project. (GS)

4. Post-COIL/VE Reflections

C4.1 Build personal skills including resilience and pragmatism to counter the COIL/VE challenges

C4.1.1 *Well, that it needs to be part of a module or part of the curriculum also to motivate students because, yeah, there is, you have to do a lot of intrinsic motivation. So, Yeah, and take time to set it up. You do need to align with your partner quite extensively. And find the right person, right? I mean, talking to policy makers or heads of something, that's all good to get, to get it covered and to align, but eventually you need to be with somebody that you can work with. And yeah, and I also find being pragmatic then also helps a lot, I think.. (GN).*

C4.2 The challenges can be overcome collaboratively with other women in COIL/VE: the COIL/VE global 'sorority'.

C3.9.1 *The women I work with in VE, we've seen each other through so many challenges over the years. (GN)*

C3.9.2 *It opened a door to know I could I have friends from different places of the world. Strong women, I have had the opportunity to meet a lot of women who are really, really, really a role model for me and have helped me overcome challenges.*

Professional

The importance of COIL/VE for their professional development was stressed by all participants. They agreed that COIL/VE can enhance professional capital and empower women in particular. Many interviewees associated 'transformational' with professional enhancement linked to COIL/VE. They stated that

COIL/VE offered them the opportunity to review one's teaching and learning approach and see it through an innovative and digitally mediated lens.

Participants also observed that this 'professionalisation' positively affected their students too, as also mentioned in the example of the curriculum enhancement in the 'Empowerment' section and as illustrated in other literature linked to this project (Orsini-Jones et al., 2025; Orsini-Jones et al., forthcoming 2026)

In this section we will provide the general insights that emerged on professional development through COIL/VE from the women's voices

1. Professional capital – opportunity for learning and growth.

P1.1 *It was very enriching and for me, it's for sure professional growth and professional development in such an alternative way, not just attending some workshops or conferences. (GS)*

P1.2 *It is learning by doing, active learning and we are as teachers who understand that we have to learn during our whole life. And for me this is an endless process of self Improvement, self development. (GS)*

P1.3 *(COIL/VE) defines my professional trajectory (GN)*

P1.4 *It's almost like continuous professional development for me (GN)*

P1.5 *I thought this is a very good opportunity for research for female academics. (GN)*

P1.6 *Oh you know what, I think I know what persuaded me was that I went to the meeting with the partners, met them and I said, how can I not do this? It's such a fantastic opportunity. (GN)*

2. Recommendation for institutional adoption.

P2.1 *And I wanted to say, in general, I wish, I really wish that schools or universities in general could have VE programs, and not only at, I mean as a professors or teachers initiative, but something that could be like part of the institution. Where you're working but I think that that would be something that would be very nice because there are institutions which have done it and it has worked well. There are a lot of people who have participated in VEs and the experiences are very good. And not only for language classes. (GS)*

3. COIL/VE – a career changing experience.

P3.1 *And now, for example, I am a kind of VE ambassador at university, talking everywhere about how VE changed my life, you know, my academic courses, research and so on. And also not only for work, but also for life, my perspective. For example, in the past I didn't think about working in another country, but because of the collaborations, I realised that "why not?", for example. (GS)*

P3.2 *At the end of the day, I was able to use the outcomes of the COIL to provide evidence of my work to a point of the impact of that work on my student, on my career and on the society, which gained me the promotion. (GN)*

P3.3 *I think I owe my career, in a way, to COIL, because I would not have raised my hand to do the job that did not exist before, because nobody thought that it could be a role in my university to internationalise the curriculum. (GN)*

4. Developing skills 1 – digital.

P4.1 *I think the international, the collaboration I have and the international contacts I have with the department university but also, I am working on my digital skills which seems to be apparent during COVID but they still yeah, you need to keep learning these things. Because of the dependency on technology, it's offered quite a range of possibilities, like we are talking like this (online) now. (GN)*

5. Developing skills 2 - motivational and dialogue.

P5.1 *Well, that it needs to be part of a module or part of the curriculum also to motivate students because [...] you have to do a lot of intrinsic motivation. And take time to set it up. You do need to align with your partner quite extensively. And find the right person, right? I mean, talking to policy makers or heads of something, that's all good to get, to get it covered and to align, but eventually you need to be with somebody that you can work with. And I also find being pragmatic then also helps a lot, I think. (GN)*

6. Developing skills 3 - leading/leadership in a new field.

P6.1 *Some of the attributes and qualities that I think VE has potential to offer, like the compassion, understanding, and critical reflexivity (are developed) and leadership as well. (GN)*

P6.2 *(You learn) the way to lead with people online. (GN)*

7. Developing Global Citizenship Education Competencies 1 - online facilitation.

P7.1 *Facilitating dialogue is a different skill and it's a different task. And I think when you do that, the more you do that the more you learn to better understand what it means to be inclusive and mindful. Because this is when you get to, to read or watch or listen to stories to different stories, difficult stories, right? This is where you learn how to, when to stop, when to request. You know when, when to do probing this is when you, when you learn how to, maybe, be more compassionate or empathetic. (GS)*

8. Developing Global Citizenship Education Competencies 2 – learning a pedagogical approach “otherwise”/ transformational.

P7.1 *It has had a major impact on the way I teach. [...] I'm just a different teacher. (GN)*

P7.2 *COIL has had a major impact on (my realisation) that teaching is not a solitary activity, it's a collective activity and this is the beauty of COIL, it is that it can't happen if you are not connected. (GN)*

P7.3 *It gave me the opportunity to be able to model, to change my teaching approach towards the type of students I was teaching. (GN)*

P7.4 First of all, we work together with teachers who believe in COIL, so XXXX is a great example for me and I learnt a lot, a lot, from her. Second, I learnt new styles of teaching, because normally we conduct our own lessons and we don't observe the process from other teachers' perspectives and here you work with other teachers and you observe them. You learned from them. (GS)

P7.5 I could say that COIL/VE is maybe transformative. Because you can see the world differently after you pass through these kind of projects. (GS)

P7.6 It changes people's minds. And people's behaviours and attitudes. (GS)

P7.7 I was amazed to see that I have to find a new way to be a mature lecturer in this space. (GN)

P7.8 And also the big value is actually education in all of this, so we never are the same before the COIL and after COIL. (GS)

P7.9 What is special about the COIL/VE learning space? For me it is not a place for grades or like Super Mario to collect the gold and jump through to save the princess from the castle. It's a journey, it's an experience, more like Lord of the Rings in that sense, I guess. (GS)

P7.10 It teaches you new ways of learning. (GS)

P7.11 Speaking about instructors, I have to admit that we are often very limited by our local educational concepts or academic policy, or just our perception of some educational phenomenon, and the participation in COIL is also enriching for us personally, because I can see diverse perspectives and I can find solutions to some issues which I might have seen as a as a dead end. (GS)

9. Developing self-confidence and self-value - psychological and professional capital gain.

P8.1 So I think I've changed a lot my practice as a teacher, I have become more confident after this years (of COIL/VE) and now I can have more opportunities to empower my students to do whatever they want to open their minds to each of these projects (GN)

P8.2 I'm now known for COIL/VE and this has given me a certain power and an expertise. (GN)

10. COIL/VE professional value added - building networks, forging friendships and having female role models.

P9.1 Talking, you know, as a woman, for example. I think that for me it is difficult for me to go to another company to be there for example one year because of my family organization here. And then I think that VE projects, they are excellent, because I work a lot with many people from other parts of the world. We write papers together, we go to online conferences, we present papers together. (GS)

P9.2 Yesterday I talked to a group of people from many different countries. It was related to the SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals) project. I think that it is impossible to have meetings like these, you know, every day in a different place of the world. So I think it is more inclusive because of this. (GS)

P9.3 It's been very empowering because I've tended to work almost exclusively with women, and we've built

networks together where we're not just colleagues, but we've become really, really good friends. Women who are the cited scholars on COIL/VE have been so welcoming and supportive, and they've opened doors for me. (GN)

P9.4 The value of a coil project for me as an academic lies in the connections and the context that you make with international universities (GS)

P9.5 So, yeah, the, the value is really in more than the project. It's really in those connections and engagement and the possibilities that can come from that. (GS)

P9.6 It is an opportunity to be prepared, to be well prepared for globalised team working, consortia and work in a team

It has enabled me to work, develop research and write papers with another colleague. (GS)

P9.7 I think these VE experiences increased my networking as a female academic. And I can see that especially we built a kind of nice community around VE and nearly all of them the, you know, academics that I have worked with, are female. (GS)

11. COIL/VE as a research development opportunity

P10.1 I think it, gives you at least, for professional development, it gives you many opportunities, not only because you can publish, because you can exchange ideas with other colleagues when you participate in a conference but because you have to study as well. (GS)

12. COIL/VE supports problem solving, innovation and collaborate on learning about the world

P11.1 Speaking about instructors, I have to admit that we are often very limited by our local educational concepts or academia policy, or just our perception of some educational phenomenon and the participation in COIL is also enriching for us personally, because I can see diverse perspective and I can find solution to some issues which I might have seen as a as a dead end. (GS)

P11.2 That is why I think that it (COIL/VE) is, it is a restorative tool and it might be a strategy. Nobody has implemented it as a restorative strategy [...], so now we've conducted some questionnaires, and we are trying with our colleagues to figure out the scientific background and maybe build some strategies and some educational competencies to be implemented for preservice teachers. (GS)

P11.3 I think it widens our perspective about the world. You know, I think it is a way to, you know, have different things about the world. It is a possibility, an opportunity to learn more about the order (of things) and about the world. (GS)

P11.4 But there are many things being done. You know, like how to negotiate and how different people see the work that is being done. This is interesting to see, you know, how we negotiate. (GS)

13. COIL/VE to support students' professional and academic capital

P12.1 I saw the students celebrate themselves how COIL benefitted them and (what it) linked to, when they did a market entry strategy and/or when they led a cross-culture team. You know, (this was) during the COVID period and

they used that (their COIL experience) for their interviews, and then they got a job (thanks to it). So we didn't tell the students to do it. They did it themselves. (GN)

P12.2 So I try and sell it in terms of development of key skills. Looking good on your CV, an example of a time when you've worked in a multicultural team when you go for an interview. So I try and pitch it in terms of the advantages during their studies but also post their studies as well. (GN)

P12.3 When you go for an interview, you'll be asked to tell them a time when you've worked in a multicultural team or a time when you've faced communication differences and challenges and how you've overcome those. So, we'll say use the COIL projects as an example. (GN)

P12.4 It's not until afterwards that they really do see the benefits in terms of how it supports their career planning. Had they thought about going to work in that other country? I know that my students like getting LinkedIn with their counterparts in the other country. (GN)

P12.5 And when we talk about VE, we're kind of talking about some kind of fishbowl experience. We create some kind of space for students to practise a certain skill, interaction, dialogue and showing respect, but this skill has implications for the for, for the broader world which is like networking. Building your own community. (GN)

P12.5 (For our students) it is learning about learning as well, because this is definitely a new way of learning [...] everybody, every university student for example, should have the opportunity to do something like this. (GS)

P12.6 I only understood after, I don't know like after the seventh VE that it could be used by them in resumes. Actually, after my student applied for Fulbright programme and she included this experience in her motivational letter. And this is a big actually a big advantage because as teachers we take something like for granted like next COIL, next COIL, but for them is really first step in something. (GS) [also reported under 'Empowerment' E4.1.7]

P12.7 You know something that is really beneficial for students, this is actually active learning and this is something that they will always remember and you kind of have such a special bond with your students after this because you have different situation that you overcome together. This is the first thing that came to my mind, like you grow as a professional. (GS)

P12.8 I think it's more experiential. But, yeah, I think what is most important, it's a real life experience for students. So it's not a made up or theoretical or something like, like that or a simulation, but it's real. (GN)

Final recommendations and conclusion

As well as including the specific insights on inclusivity, empowerment, challenging and professional in COIL/VE provided by the *Female Voices* participants, we would like to conclude this Toolkit with general recommendations for the implementation of sustainable and successful COIL/VE exchanges based on our study findings::

Invest in Long-Term Planning and Relationship Building

- **Initial Planning Phase:** Allocate sufficient time (e.g., 12 planning sessions over a year) to build trust and alignment with international partners.
- **Collaborative Design:** Discuss mutual interests, course alignment, and pedagogical approaches early on.
- **Sustainability:** Treat the initial planning as an investment—once established, the framework can be reused and refined annually.

Align COIL with Curriculum and Institutional Goals

- **Curriculum Integration:** Embed COIL into course design with clear intended learning outcomes.
- **Institutional Support:** Advocate for COIL to be recognized in institutional KPIs (Key Performance Indicators).
- **Documentation:** Use formal agreements (e.g., expressions of interest) to clarify roles, expectations, and course contributions.

Guard COIL/VE activities in HE

A final recommendation is to 'protect' COIL/VE activities in HE, as they do empower women and promote EDI. That said, COIL/VE can easily be expropriated by neoliberal agendas in contexts that do not cherish the values and capitals of Global Citizenship Education for peace and social justice that COIL/VE promotes.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank all the women who agreed to participate in this project and provided us with valuable insights for COIL/VE, the women who gave talks at our dissemination events, the administrative staff who supported us and the funders who provided us with the resources to carry out *Female Voices* (BA/Leverhulme SRG23\231301).

References

- Beelen, J., & Jones, E. (2015). Redefining internationalization at home. In A. Curaj, L. Matei, R. Pricopie, J. Salmi, & P. Scott (Eds.), *The European higher education area: Between critical reflections and future policies* (pp. 59–72). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-20877-0_5
- Bhabha, H. K., & Rutherford, J. (2006). Third space. *Multitudes*, 26(3), 95–107. <https://doi.org/10.3917/mult.026.0095>
- Bourdieu, P. (2006). Cultural reproduction and social reproduction. In D. B. Grusky & S. Szelenyi (Eds.), *Inequality: Classic readings in race, class, and gender* (pp. 257–271). Westview Press. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429499838>
- Brunsoni, M., Damian, R., Grifoll Sauri, J., Jackson, S., Kömürçügil, H., Malmedy, M., Matveeva, O., Motova, G., Piszcz, S., Pol, P., Rostlund, A., Soboleva, E., Tavares, O., & Zobel, L. (2014). *The concept of excellence in higher education*. Occasional Paper 20. European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education AISBL. <https://www.enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/The-concept-of-Excellence-in-Higher-Education.pdf>
- Evidence-Validated Online Learning through Virtual Exchange (EVOLVE). (2025). What is Virtual Exchange? <https://evolve-erasmus.eu/about-evolve/what-is-virtual-exchange/>
- Finardi, K., & Aşık, A. (2024). Possibilities of virtual exchange for Internationalization at Home: Insights from the Global South. *Journal of Virtual Exchange*, 7, 1-22. <https://doi.org/10.21827/jve7.39593>
- Finardi, K. R., & Guimarães, F. F. (2020). Internationalization and the Covid-19 pandemic: Challenges and Opportunities for the Global South. *Journal of Education, Teaching and Social Studies*, 2(4), 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.22158/Jetss.V2n4p1>
- Gronseth, S., Flood, M., & Galvin, T. (2025). What is next for Universal Design for Learning? UDL 3.0 and Implications for Diverse Settings. *The International Journal of Universal Design and Universal Design for Learning*, 1(1), 237–247. <https://doi.org/10.34874/PRSM.ijudl-vol1iss1.4993>
- Helm, F., Baroni, A. & Acconcia, G. (2024). Global citizenship online in higher education. *Educ Res Policy Prac* 23, (1–18). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10671-023-09351-6>
- Leask, B. (2020). Internationalization of the curriculum, teaching and learning. In P. N. Teixeira & J. C. Shin (Eds.), *The international encyclopaedia of higher education systems and institutions* (pp. 1940–1949). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-017-8905-9_244
- Leask, B., & Bridge, C. (2013). Comparing internationalisation of the curriculum in action across disciplines: theoretical and practical perspectives. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education*, 43(1), 79–101. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03057925.2013.746566>
- Orsini-Jones, M., & Finardi, K. R. (2024). Out of the comfort zone: The trouble with a MOOC–virtual exchange blend at the time of the COVID-19 pandemic. In J. P. Davies, E. Gironacci, S. McGowan, A. Nyamapfene, J. Rattray, A. M. Tierney, & A. S. Webb (Eds.), *Threshold concepts in the moment* (pp. 307–325). Brill. https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004680661_020
- Orsini-Jones, M., Chen, Y. H., Koseoglu, G., Mkpayah, P., Suri, P., & Zhang, K. (accepted, forthcoming 2026). Virtual Exchange as an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion-Compliant Approach to English Language Teacher Education. In C-C, Lin, C., Vaz Bauler, & E. Servano (Eds.), *Virtual Exchange as Justice-oriented Practices: Navigating Identity, Language, and Power*. (pp. TBC). Multilingual Matters.
- Orsini-Jones, M., Jacobs, L., Finardi, K., & Wimpenny, K. (2025). Collaborative online international learning as a postdigital connected, embodied, relational & (socio)material Third Space: female voices. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 44(1), 237–252. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2024.2429438>
- Ortiz-Rojo, R. A., Finardi, K. R., & Lacruz, A. J. (2025). Global citizenship: insights from universities in the Global North and Global South. *Ensaio: Avaliação e Políticas Públicas em Educação*, 33(128). <https://doi.org/10.1590/S0104-40362025003305123>
- Rubin, J. & Guth, S. (Eds.) (2022). *The Guide to COIL Virtual Exchange: Implementing, Growing, and Sustaining Collaborative Online International Learning*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003447832>
- Shabalala, N. P. (2025). Global citizenship education as a strategy for social, justice and identity: achieving balance for meaningful social impact. *Globalisation, Societies and Education*, 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14767724.2025.2537371>
- Stein, S., & Andreotti, V. (2021). Global citizenship otherwise. In E. Bosio (Ed.), *Conversations on global citizenship education: Research, teaching and learning* (pp. 13–36). Routledge.
- UNESCO (2025). Global citizenship and peace education. Beyond borders and differences: an education that connects us all and expands horizons. <https://www.unesco.org/en/global-citizenship-peace-education?hub=87862>
- Wimpenny, K., Finardi, K. R., Orsini-Jones, M., & Jacobs, L. (2022). Knowing, Being, Relating and Expressing Through Third Space Global South-North COIL: Digital Inclusion and Equity in International Higher Education. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 26(2), 279–296. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10283153221094085>
- Wimpenny, K. & Orsini-Jones, M. (2020). Innovation in Collaborative Online International Learning: A Holistic Blend. In Burgos, D. (Ed.), *Radical Solutions and eLearning* (pp. 1–25). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-15-4952-6_1

Appendices

Appendix 1: Focus group questions

1. Reflecting on your COIL/VE what would you describe as the strongest values that your experience and work from?
2. In engaging with your COIL/VE partner, to what extent do you experience it an equal partnership, where all can make meaningful contributions and decide on priorities, themes, assessment tasks, etc? can you give specific examples of how this played out?
3. To what extent do you experience intentional and authentic recognition and affirmation of equal worth, combined with non-discrimination and inclusivity? Alternatively, how is the inequality navigated?
4. How easily does open and transparent communication occur, or alternatively, do you constantly have to remind yourself that you are an ambassador of your country and university and have to draw on your "diplomacy" skills? Can you perhaps refer to real experiences that you had?
5. Do you view the different natures and priorities of the countries, universities and even subjects to be problematic in COIL/VE, or is it easy to bring in an appreciative lens and affirmation of value added?
6. In what ways are you able to leverage on the transformative power of COIL/VE, and collaboration, or not? Again, we will appreciate examples.
7. What lenses, world-views and theoretical perspective do you take with you into the whole COIL/VE cycle? Do you even experience different and diverse philosophical points of departures, and how does that play out in the COIL/VE preparation and COIL/VE cycle?
8. Which "capitals" and "superpowers" do you draw from, and do your students draw from to have success in COIL/VE?

Appendix 2: Individual Interview Questions

Before we start with the questions below: Ice breaker – openings

Please bring an artefact/photograph/poem associated with your experience of COIL-VE- and share its meaning with your interviewer.

Questions

As a female academic who had participated or led a COIL-VE project:

- 1) What words might you use to describe COIL-VE?
- 2) How might you describe COIL-VE as a learning space?
- 3) In your experience have COIL-VE exchanges been well integrated into a module/course as part of the internationalisation of the curriculum?
- 4) In your view, to what extent has COIL-VE offered opportunity to embrace diversity and inclusive participation, and in particular, for women?
- 5) How has COIL-VE enabled you to feel included (or not) as a female academic?
- 6) Were there instances that you can share where you experienced particular issues pertaining to the inclusion of diverse female voices, and if so what did those different perspectives offer?
- 7) To what extent have you experienced COIL-VE promoting a sense of openness and curiosity through diverse students interacting and sharing knowledge perspectives, and with what impact? *Depending on the response to the above Also how do colleagues feel COIL influences student and staff perspectives within the wider programme of study thereafter?*
- 8) In your opinion could / should COIL-VE be better designed to include female students' diverse perspectives / voices? How and what impact might this have? (e.g., wider impact on the programme of study?)
- 9) What attributes, qualities and capabilities do you think COIL-VE has potential to offer for your learning as a female academic?
- 10) What / how do you think COIL-VE might offer / or has contributed to your future study/work/life as a female academic?
- 11) Reflecting on your COIL-VE experience, what would you say was valued in the group?
- 12) What values guided the COIL-VE project?
- 13) Where resources of whatever kind were not equal, how did you deal with it?
- 14) Did you think your experiences were similar to those of your female COIL-VE partners?
- 15) What would your recommendations include if you were to provide advice on how to set up COIL-VE to a colleague?
- 16) Anything else you would like to contribute?



ISBN 978-1-84600-1345

2025

CC BY-NC-SA 4.0

Creative Commons [Deed - Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/) - Creative Commons