

VIBES

Virtual Business Skills Empowerment

VIBES IO3: Educational Content Development

Curricula examples



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Making use of VIBES for educational content development

The VIBES tool can be applied to develop different type of curricula for multicultural virtual teamworking skills. The tool provides a framework of the key dimensions of virtual team working skills, structured in a VIBES Competence Framework for Virtual Teamwork that can be leveraged for educational content development.

The VIBES framework and the tool are described in more detail in the full IO3 report. This document provides examples of how the VIBES framework can be applied to develop and design educational content for learners at different levels.

VIBES is a systematic modular tool that aims to capture the overlapping nature of the topics and sub-topics related to multicultural virtual teamworking skills. It also allows for multiple perspectives to be taken into consideration. The VIBES tool provides a logical structure and a framework, while simultaneously providing the educator the flexibility to choose which topic or sub-topics to address in specific learning activities. It can be applied to address the development of virtual skills systematically, with different learning outcomes resulting from a similar learning path, while acknowledging distinct aspects of complexity in the process. Building on a common learning path, the approach also enables the construction of cross-level learning experiences where desired.

The VIBES approach does not prescribe defined methods of teaching or learning. Instead, it highlights the key skills and competences for working in virtual environments and leaves space for co-designing the learning experience in different contexts and different skills levels. This allows for starting the learning journey from distinct stages and facilitating progress towards new objectives. With the VIBES tolls, learning paths can be adapted to the specific needs of the educators and learners. It provides a flexible and comprehensive architecture of multi-purpose learning spaces for virtual teams.

VIBES applied to curricula and content for different levels of education

VIBES can be used to develop educational content for high school, university, as well as graduate/professional education. This document outlines four example curricula to illustrate how the VIBES framework can be leveraged to generate courses and educational content focused on a single topic, multiple topics, or different levels of learning and education to foster virtual team working skills.

Examples include:

- ‘Culture and Ways of Working in Virtual Organizations’
5 ECTS Master’s level course focused on a single sub-topic
- ‘Supporting Employees’ Work-Life Balance in Different Virtual Business Environments’
5 ECTS Master’s level course addressing multiple sub-topics
- ‘Death on the Web’
2 ECTS Workshop for High School, Bachelor’s Degree & Master’s Degree
- ‘Virtual Teamworking Master Class’
3-5 ECTS Course for undergraduate and high school students, Master’s level and professional profiles

These examples demonstrate the versatility of the framework and illustrate how the VIBES tool can be used to generate educational content ranging from learning activities to courses or extended curricula in a flexible manner. However, they are a mere starting point – the framework can be applied to design different kinds of learning experiences and educational content to meet the needs of different kinds of learners.

Example I: Culture and Ways of Working in Virtual Organizations (Master's)

Curriculum example of single sub-topic

Course title	Culture and Ways of Working in Virtual Organizations
Educational level	Master's Degree
Credits	5 ECTS
Schedule	8-week course with 3 full day contact days
Objective	Student learns about cultures and ways of working in virtual multicultural organizations. Diverse working cultures impact net etiquette and company norms. It is harder to have a balance between scheduled meetings and spontaneous dynamics.
Transferrable	<p>Student understands that companies need to facilitate transparent discussions on norms, values, and ethics in everyday working life in a way that allows employees to be able to familiarize themselves with them and act accordingly. As virtual environments often have multicultural teams, it is important to remember there are many ways of interactions.</p> <p>Student learns that when developing net etiquette company should construct it as a mix of diverse cultural behaviours, rather than single dominant one. The guidelines and training need to be accessible and understandable by the employee.</p> <p>Student learns that there are more multicultural and diverse working environments in the virtual, as companies can hire globally. The working environment should support and embrace the diversity by allowing individuals to feel safe to express their differences and alternative ways of doing things.</p> <p>Student learns that in virtual teams there are often cross-functional teams with varied levels of experience amongst members. Members needs to be egalitarian when interacting with one another, but this is harder in some cultures because of the hierarchical differences.</p> <p>Student learns that there is a need to be extremely specific in communicating commitments and schedules as it is more important in virtual. Diverse cultures also have different perceptions of time. Teams need to respect agreed commitments and schedules to reduce uncertainty and ensure workflow.</p> <p>Student learns that conscious socializing is hard in the virtual environment and companies should put effort in supporting it by creating flexible dynamics where employees make themselves available for impromptu interactions.</p>

	There should be a balance between scheduled meetings and spontaneous socializing to create flow of work.
Practice	<p>Contact days include lectures and discussions on the topics of culture and ways of working.</p> <p>Students will create guidelines and ways of working to two imaginary companies merging which have quite different working cultures. As a result, groups present defined common middle ground to facilitate collective understanding of communications and operations. This is done as a launch event of the new company culture which is supported by visual presentation and short video. Group work also includes 10 page per person report. Students will apply relevant theory and utilize relevant tools when presenting their solutions.</p>
Theory and tools	Academic and professional text related to mergers and acquisitions addressing operational challenges.
Assessment	<p>Bloom's taxonomy is used as a base of assessment.</p> <p>Grading 1-5</p> <p>1-2: The student understands what culture and ways of working means in a company context.</p> <p>3-4: The student can understand the company culture and ways of working and can apply their learnings from various sources.</p> <p>5: The student understands company culture and ways of working. They can apply their learnings and create new innovative approaches.</p>

Example II: Supporting Employees' Work-Life Balance in Different Virtual Business Environments (Master's)

Curriculum example of combined sub-topics

Course title	Supporting Employees' Work-Life Balance in Different Virtual Business Environments
Educational level	Master's Degree
Credits	5 ECTS
Schedule	8-week course with 3 full day contact days
Objective	<p>Student learns about people management in virtual environment. In a virtual environment there is a risk for micro-managing, and emphasis should be on the leadership instead of management. Managing in virtual space often requires more time and support to employees, both emotionally and with their roles, to reach common targets.</p> <p>Student also learns about work-life balance and how to support it in a virtual environment. The importance of maintaining mental and physical wellbeing is highlighted in remote working and there is a big need for self-management in meeting targets and maintaining motivation.</p>
Transferrable	<p>Student learns that there is tendency for increased micro-management in virtual environment and emphasis should be in leadership instead of management. Self-management and peer support by the team members reduces tendency of micro-manage.</p> <p>Student learns the importance of self-awareness and calling attention for support when needed from manager or team member. It is important to be empathetic, to provide support to other team members, by respecting cultural differences. Because of isolation there is heightened need for supporting team members, both emotionally and with their role.</p> <p>Student understands the limitations of non-verbal messaging in a virtual environment and the need to verbalise more than in face-to-face communication. Non-verbal communication can be facilitated for instance by setting norms to keep cameras on. Team members can also ease communication through active listening or responding, even though it might not be a prevailing practice in individual cultures.</p> <p>Student learns that for employee to manage their work, it is important that there are clear and realistic targets, both at a company level as well as an</p>

	<p>individual level. Especially, when working in remote teams, it is important that aims and schedules are communicated clearly and openly through discussions.</p> <p>Student understands that virtual environments and global teams allow more flexibility in working hours. This requires more trust in employer-employee relationships and increases the employee's responsibility of balancing their private and professional lives. When teams are multi-cultural, the understanding of work-life balance varies, which requires teams to align their practices through guidelines.</p>
Practice	<p>Contact days include lectures and discussions on the topics of culture and ways of working.</p> <p>Students will create supervising guidelines to employee discussions, both on a team and individual level. As a result, groups present the plans. Each group has its own specific business environment (for example, financial, technology and social services). Presentations are done supported by visual presentation and short video. Group work also includes 10 page per person report. Students will apply relevant theory and utilize relevant tools when presenting their solutions.</p>
Theory and tools	<p>Academic and professional text related to operational management, human resources, and strategic leadership with respect to work-life balance.</p>
Assessment	<p>Bloom's taxonomy is used as a base of assessment.</p> <p>Grading 1-5 1-2: Understand 3-4: Apply 5: Create</p>

Example III: Supporting Employees' Work-Life Balance in Different Virtual Business Environments (High School, Bachelor's, Master's)

Curriculum example of combined three levels

Course title	Death on the Web
Educational level	High School, Bachelor's Degree & Master's Degree
Credits	2 ECTS
Schedule	Weekend workshop
Objective	<p>Student learns about cultures and ways of working in virtual multicultural organizations.</p> <p>Student learns about communication in virtual teams. In a virtual environment, limited non-verbal communication and heavy reliance on written communication can lead to misinterpretations. Virtual communication requires emotional intelligence and awareness of communication and interaction styles, as well as a low threshold to contact others.</p> <p>Student learns about dynamics in companies. Facilitating group dynamics in a way that engages everyone and all members feel included is important. As information is scattered and it takes more time and effort to explain things, the tempo of the interactions can become stiffer and breaks can easily be forgotten, which can then lead to multitasking and individuals not concentrating fully.</p>
Transferrable	<p>Student learns that virtual meeting should be led in a way that is engaging and everyone is being heard. It is individuals' responsibility to actively engage themselves in meetings. All team members should react supportively and create an engaging environment.</p> <p>Student learns that in virtual teams there are often cross-functional teams with varied levels of experience amongst members. Members needs to be egalitarian when interacting with one another, but this is harder in some cultures because of the hierarchical differences.</p> <p>The student learns that because of differences in cultural backgrounds it takes even more time and effort to explain things in the virtual environment and to keep track of sub-conversations in harder. It is important to be prepared and distribute material beforehand when going to a meeting as it helps with aligning perspectives and increases efficiency. By appropriately utilizing tools it is easier to visualizing things.</p>

	The student learns that as information is scattered and there is a potential information overload, there is a need to create coherent approach to maintaining information and communicating it. Information needs to be well structured and centrally accessible for the team and everyone needs to be mindful what is shared and who needs the information.
Practice	<p>Students from diverse backgrounds and educational levels collaborate in a murder mystery type of a role play where each member is given a character and pieces of information. Groups need to work together to solve a given problem based on the scattered knowledge.</p> <p>Workshop coaches team building and problem-solving skills in a playful setting. Participants need to use their assessment skills and interact with people from various backgrounds in a motivating manner.</p>
Theory and tools	<p>Role folders with character information, folders of clues and information.</p> <p>Virtual whiteboards, Zoom breakout rooms and other appropriate tools.</p>
Assessment	Fail/Pass

Example IV: Virtual Teamworking Master Class (Undergraduate, High School, Master’s, Professionals)

Applied curriculum example

These curricula are developed to have the same learning path for the Undergraduate/High School and the Masters/professional levels. The purpose was to facilitate multi-level integration possibilities in the learner's experience and to facilitate developing distinct roles in the problem spaces.

Course title	Virtual Teamworking Master Class
Educational level	Second Year Undergraduate and High School Students, Masters/Professional (8 – 20 students)
Credits	3 -5 ECTS
Schedule	8-week course with 3 full day contact days. Depending on the Institutional requirements for the module.
Objectives	<p>Managing in virtual space often requires more time and support to employees, both emotionally and with their roles, to reach common targets. It is important to make sure all team members are engaged through a clear onboarding.</p> <p>Virtual communication requires emotional intelligence and awareness of communication and interaction styles, as well as a low threshold to contact others.</p> <p>Student learns about dynamics in companies. Facilitating group dynamics in a way that engages everyone and all members feel included is important.</p>
Transferrable	<p>Student learns the importance of self-awareness and calling attention for support when needed from manager or team member. It is important to be empathetic, to provide support to other team members, by respecting cultural differences. Because of isolation there is heightened need for supporting team members, both emotionally and with their role.</p> <p>Student learns that virtual meeting should be led in a way that is engaging and everyone is being heard. It is individuals' responsibility to actively engage themselves in meetings. All team members should react supportively and create an engaging environment.</p>

	<p>Student learns the importance of creating a systematic continuous onboarding process that is engaging and comprehensive, as the starting point in global hiring is more varied in the virtual space. Building team cohesion is a key success factor to efficient team working. It requires more accountability from the individual as informal guidance is less available in the virtual environment.</p> <p>Non-verbal communication can be facilitated for instance by setting norms to keep cameras on. Team members can also ease communication through active listening or responding, even though it might not be a prevailing practice in individual cultures.</p> <p>Cultural differences can create stereotyping and conflicts in teams, so collaboration requires consideration, patience, and emotional intelligence.</p> <p>Student learns to be active and take responsibility to reach out and respond to others to maintain contact in a virtual environment.</p> <p>Student learns to be aware and assume accountability for own communication and interaction style. Particular attention should be paid to communicating with non-native speakers.</p> <p>Student learns to pay attention to written communication in a virtual environment and understands the risks of misinterpretation, especially when interacting with non-native speakers.</p> <p>The student learns when being active in participating meetings the individuals need to pay attention to and give room to others, the active and the passive participants, as well as the introverts and extroverts. Companies should facilitate dynamics that everyone is engaged and included. Because culture defines the expected behavior, there is increased need of inclusivity to overcome prescribed patterns.</p> <p>The student learns that virtual work culture should promote and expect the members to concentrate fully in virtual environment and limit multitasking. By making sure there are not too many and too long meetings it is easier to support focus.</p> <p>When facilitating meetings, the agenda and time needs to be managed and breaks should be scheduled in between meetings. The length of the meetings should not get unnecessarily long and other people's scheduled should be respected.</p>
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	<p>It is important to be prepared and distribute material beforehand when going to a meeting as it helps with aligning perspectives and increases efficiency. By appropriately utilizing tools it is easier to visualizing things.</p> <p>The student learns that as information is scattered and there is a potential information overload, there is a need to create coherent approach to maintaining information and communicating it. Information needs to be well structured and centrally accessible for the team and everyone needs to be mindful what is shared and who needs the information.</p>
Practice	<p>Virtual/Contact days include lectures and discussions on the topics of culture and ways of working.</p> <p>They will need to make agreements about their own team dynamics, how and where they will communicate with each other, and then introduce their team to others.</p> <p>Students will create an onboarding process for a virtual team member and develop an awareness of the differences in groupwork or teamwork and how it affects communications in virtual multicultural teams which is supported by visual presentation and short video.</p> <p>Students will apply relevant theory and utilize relevant tools when presenting their solutions.</p>
Theory and tools	Academic and professional text related to teamwork
Assessment	<p>Bloom's taxonomy is used as a base of assessment.</p> <p>Grading 1-5</p> <p>1-2: The student understands what culture and ways of working means in a company context.</p> <p>3-4: The student can understand the company culture and ways of working and can apply their learnings from various sources.</p> <p>5: The student understands company culture and ways of working.</p> <p>They can apply their learnings and create new innovative approaches.</p>

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Virtual Business Skills Empowerment

Strengthening Competences for Working in
Multicultural Virtual Environments
to Support the Evolving Business World



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