

Virtual Mobility and Virtual Exchange: Design and Perceptions of **World Class Day**

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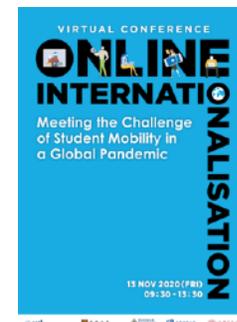
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Virtual Conference – Online Internationalisation

Meeting the Challenge of Student Mobility in a Global Pandemic

CoP-ITL

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World Class Day (WCD) is a free virtual conference for students' research (<https://artsandscience.usask.ca/event/2020/world-class-day/>)

- 70 students at 16 universities in 7 countries have presented at WCD.
- Sponsored by faculty at their home institutions, students from senior secondary school to PhD submit proposals to the conference. No disciplinary or topical limit is imposed.
- Students present their projects live to an international audience of experts and students in various disciplines.
- Each presentation lasts five minutes plus questions and discussion.
- Presenters are expected to keep things simple and talk about what they know well: the context, question, theory or method, insight, and implications of their project.

World Class Day arises from these propositions:

Applying valid principles to the identification and interpretation of the widest range of cultural and intellectual materials, and advancing arguments based on such application, the Humanities are central to the conduct of discourse in and about research.

With mentorship and a clear process, students in their first year of university (and indeed earlier) can carry out what John Willison at the University of Adelaide has called unbounded research (MELT).

When students discuss their research, everyone encounters special opportunities for and challenges to sustaining and advancing intercultural awareness. The discourse should be shaped to anticipate the challenges and facilitate the opportunities.

Timeline

2017

- March Coordinated by Kara Loy at the University of Saskatchewan, a micro-conference showcasing students' original research takes place in a first-year course in English: 80 students, 20 groups, 4 minutes each. With Loy's and later Merle Massie's support, this experiment is repeated in March 2018 and February 2020.
- June [Summer Institute on Social Justice](#) (IITGN / USask); Payel Chattopadhyay Mukherjee, Lisa Vargo, and Parkinson plan a pilot project in synchronous international teaching connecting classes at Ahmedabad University and USask.
- October In a shared module of comparative study on nation and narrative in India and Canada, Mukherjee, Vargo, and Parkinson give synchronous lectures in each other's courses at Ahmedabad University and USask. This experiment is repeated twice over the next two years.

2018

July

Yanyun Li coordinates an undergraduate research project course in English Studies at China University of Petroleum (UCP); this culminates in a micro-conference, *Signs, Spaces, and Connections: China and the World*, where 50 students present 13 group projects, on topics such as “Copy Space in Chinese and Blur in Western Landscape Painting: An Experiential Case Study,” “*Dying to Survive*: Entertainment, Law, Humanity, and Social Change,” and “Coca-Cola’s Marketing in China: Lessons Learned.”



2019

The experience of institutional roadblocks preventing expansion of synchronous international teaching led to some rethinking. (Timely advice had been given by HKU's Tracy Zou the previous summer, at the EARLI Higher Education conference in Giessen, Germany.)

By January, discussions between Jagriti Gangopadhyay (MCH), Mukherjee, Loy, and Li had produced a model for synchronous virtual international engagement directly initiated by students. This model was based on the micro-conference format that Loy had proposed and supported at USask, and that had been tested at UCP.

The group decided to act swiftly to try out this model. International leaders in student research were approached to join WCD's Advisory Board—among them HKU's Gray Kochhar-Lindgren.

March The first WCD takes place

November WCD2

2020

March WCD3 took place the day USask was shut by the pandemic.

From a student's perspective how does WCD work?

Guidelines for WCD3

The format for the presentation is simple: the presenter asks a question, cites a theory or method, indicates a motivation, identifies a key insight, and looks forward to next steps.

This brief format calls for special planning and preparation. It will not be possible to survey a general topic or rush through a long paper [...]

The presentation must offer a complete, original idea. It must be designed to capture the interest of a diverse audience.

A week before the conference, each presenter will meet with a peer mentor via a convenient app or platform.

The mentor will review the presentation, decide if it is ready for the conference, and give advice about ways to improve it.

[From the Chair's Introduction, 25 March 2019]

The overarching questions for World Class Day are these:

- How can students share their original research across distances, disciplines, and cultures?
- Across these barriers, how can they respond productively to one another's work?
- What opportunities does this event offer for new forms of research communication?

I invite you to ask questions and make suggestions about the presentations in this session. Use the Chat feature to respond to what you hear. In this way, the presenters will have the opportunity to engage with their audience.

We're still working to answer these questions.



To illustrate the points just made, I would like to show you a few seconds of video.

