ERASMUS+
BLENDED INTENSIVE PROGRAMME
ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE AND CULTURAL
EXCHANGE

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Contents

1. Project Summary

The project aims to foster academic excellence and promote cross-cultural exchange among faculty members from the University of Central Lancashire (UCLan) Cyprus and two partnering higher education institutions. Through a comprehensive blended intensive programme, participants will engage in online workshops covering essential topics such as Inclusive Andragogy in Higher Education, Curriculum Development and Assessment, Academic Integrity in Higher Education, and AI in Education. Following the online component, face-to-face workshops will take place in Cyprus, focusing on Cultural Exchange and Understanding, Challenges in Higher Education Today, Teaching Critical Thinking Skills, LinguaFiesta, and Collaborative Learning. Additionally, participants will have the opportunity to explore various cultural sites during their time in Cyprus, including the tour of the village of Pyla, renowned for its unique atmosphere of peaceful coexistence between Greek and Turkish Cypriots. They will also visit St. Lazarus Church and the Medieval Castle in Larnaca, the village of Lefkara, Ayia Napa, Protaras, Hala Sultan Tekke, and Larnaca Salt Lake. These workshops and activities are designed to deepen cultural understanding, employ inclusive teaching methodologies, nurture critical thinking skills, and provide language enrichment opportunities. The programme will culminate in a vibrant Cultural Fusion Party, providing a celebratory conclusion to the enriching experience. This initiative aims to engage a minimum of 15 participants from each of the collaborating institutions, ensuring a robust and diverse exchange of knowledge and perspectives.

2. Objectives

1. Enhance participants' understanding of academic integrity and its importance in higher education.
2. Explore the applications and ethical considerations of AI in education.
3. Develop participants' skills in curriculum development, assessment, and addressing challenges in higher education.
4. Promote cultural exchange and understanding among participants.
5. Cultivate participants' ability to design and implement instructional strategies that effectively foster critical thinking skills among students across various disciplines.
6. Equip participants with inclusive teaching strategies for diverse learners.

7. Facilitate language learning and appreciation of Greek and partner universities' cultures.

3. Methods

The project will employ a blended approach, integrating both online and face-to-face activities to achieve its objectives. Initially, online workshops will be conducted covering diverse topics such as academic integrity, AI in education, curriculum development, and challenges in higher education. These sessions will utilise a combination of presentations, case studies, group discussions, and hands-on activities to engage participants effectively.

Following the online component, face-to-face workshops will take place in Cyprus, focusing on fostering cultural exchange and understanding, inclusive andragogy, and language learning. These sessions will incorporate interactive presentations, small group discussions, cultural exhibits, and practical activities to immerse participants in diverse cultural experiences. Additionally, language workshops will provide participants with opportunities to learn basic conversational skills in Greek and the languages of the participants from the partner institutions.

The programme will culminate in the Cultural Fusion Party, where participants will celebrate Greek and partner cultures through live performances, culinary delights, language exchange sessions, and cultural booths. Throughout the project, a minimum of 15 participants from each institution will be accommodated, ensuring a diverse and inclusive cohort.

The methods employed in this project are designed to facilitate active learning, cross-cultural interactions, and the acquisition of both knowledge and practical skills. By combining online and face-to-face modalities, the programme aims to provide a comprehensive and immersive experience that promotes academic excellence and cultural exchange among participants.

4. Outcomes

1. Increased awareness and understanding of academic integrity issues.

2. Enhanced integration of AI tools in teaching practices.

3. Improved skills in curriculum development and assessment.

4. Enhanced capacity to design and implement instructional activities that promote students' critical thinking abilities, leading to deeper engagement with course content and improved problem-solving skills.

5. Strengthened resilience and innovation in addressing challenges in higher education.

6. Enhanced cultural understanding and appreciation among participants.

7. Improved ability to create inclusive learning environments.

5. Activities

Online Activities					
Activity	**Title**	**Description**	**Date**	**Time**	**Venue**
Workshop 1	Inclusive Andragogy in Higher Education	**Introduction to Inclusive Andragogy** The Principles of Andragogy **Understanding Diverse Learners** Culturally Responsive Teaching **Accessibility and Universal Design** Creating Inclusive Learning Activities **Guest Speaker: Insights on fostering inclusivity in higher education.**	03/06/2024	15:00 – 16:15 (CY Time)	–
Workshop 2	Curriculum Development and Assessment	**Essentials of Curriculum Design** Innovations in Curriculum Development **Effective Assessment Strategies** Feedback and Improvement: Utilising assessment data for continuous improvement.	05/06/2024	15:00 – 16:15 (CY Time)	–

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Workshop 3	Academic Integrity in Higher Education	**Introduction to Academic Integrity** Types of Academic Dishonesty **Technology and Academic Integrity** Prevention and Detection Strategies **Case Studies and Group Discussions** Building a Culture of Academic Integrity	07/06/2024	15:00 – 16:15 (CY Time)	-
Workshop 4	AI in Education	**Overview of AI in Education** AI Tools for Educators **Ethical Considerations** Integration of AI in Teaching Practices **Hands-On AI Applications**	10/06/2024	15:00 – 16:15 (CY Time)	-
<td colspan="5" align="center">**Face-to-Face Activities**</td>
Workshop 5	Cultural Exchange and Understanding	**Icebreaker** - Participants provide a snapshot of their cultural heritage, sharing traditions, customs, and festivities. **Exhibits** - Participants present tangible artifacts, attire, and culinary samples embodying their cultural identity. **Cultural Etiquette Insights** - Engage in conversations about communication nuances, gestures, and societal norms across different regions. **Group Discussion** - Exchange personal anecdotes highlighting both the diversities and commonalities within cultural experiences.	17/06/2024	10:00 – 11:30 (CY Time)	UCLan Cyprus campus
Cultural Event 1	Embracing Diversity in the Village of Pyla &	**Welcome to Pyla, home to UCLan Cyprus**, where Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots peacefully coexist, creating a **vibrant mix of cultures**. Experience the harmonious blend of traditions that define life in Pyla, making it a truly special destination to explore. The evening will conclude with **dinner** at one of the local restaurants in the lively village square.	17/06/2024	18:30 – 20:30 (CY Time)	Pyla, Larnaca

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	Dinner at a Local Restaurant				
Workshop 6	Challenges in Higher Education Today	**Current Challenges: Financial pressures, demographic shifts, technological disruptions.** Global Perspectives: Learning from international higher education models. **Adapting to Change: Strategies for resilience and innovation.** Faculty Panel Discussion: Experiences and insights from academic staff. **Scenario Planning Exercise: Anticipating future challenges and developing response strategies.** Building a Resilient Academic Community: Collaborative initiatives for addressing challenges.	18/06/2024	10:00 – 11:15 (CY Time)	UCLan Cyprus campus
Cultural Event 2	Visit to St. Lazarus Church and the Medieval Castle in Larnaca & Night Out at Cypriot Taverna	Explore the rich history and cultural heritage of Larnaca by visiting the **St. Lazarus Church** and **Medieval Castle**. What follows is an unforgettable evening experiencing the warmth and hospitality of a traditional **Cypriot Taverna**. Enjoy classic dishes such as moussaka, souvlaki, and halloumi, paired with local wines and spirits, as we celebrate the and traditions of Cyprus.	18/06/2024	18:00 - 20:30 (CY Time)	St. Lazarus Church & Finikoudes, Larnaca
Workshop 7	Teaching Critical Thinking Skills	**Understanding Critical Thinking** Benefits of Developing Critical Thinking Skills **Strategies for Fostering Critical Thinking** Designing Critical Thinking Activities **Assessment of Critical Thinking Skills** Integration of Critical Thinking Across the Curriculum **Promoting Metacognition and Reflection** Supporting Student Engagement and Collaboration	19/06/2024	09:15 – 10:30 (CY Time)	UCLan Cyprus campus

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Cultural Event 3	Visit to the village of Lefkara & Lunch at Cypriot Taverna	An excursion to the charming village of **Lefkara**, nestled in Cyprus' picturesque hills. Known for its traditional craftsmanship and timeless beauty, Lefkara offers a captivating glimpse into the island's rich cultural heritage. The tour begins at Lefkara's renowned lace-making workshops, where artisans handcraft intricate patterns passed down through generations. We will explore quaint boutiques and artisan shops, showcasing locally made handicrafts like silverware and pottery, concluding with a leisurely stroll through the village square, indulging in authentic Cypriot delicacies at a **traditional taverna**.	19/06/2024	11:30 – 16:00 (CY Time)	Lefkara, Larnaca
Cultural Event 4	Visit to Ayia Napa and Protaras & Lunch at Seaside Restaurant	Experience the allure of coastal Cyprus on a day trip to **Ayia Napa** and **Protaras**. Begin your journey with a scenic drive along the coastline, soaking in panoramic views of the azure Mediterranean Sea and golden sandy beaches, followed by visiting the historic Ayia Napa Monastery. Before continuing to Protaras for lunch, we will immerse ourselves in Greek culture at **Thalassa Museum**, which showcases the impact and significance of the sea on the island's history. Here, we will take a moment to reflect upon the museum exhibits and prepare for lunch in Protaras by practicing **ordering food in Greek**. We will then continue our adventure to Protaras, known for its family-friendly beaches and crystal-clear waters. At lunchtime, we will gather for a lunch at a seaside restaurant, where we will indulge in fresh seafood delicacies and traditional Cypriot specialties.	To be confirmed	09:30 – 16:00 (CY Time)	Ayia Napa and Protaras, Famagusta
Workshop 8	LinguaFiesta: Language Workshop	**Introduction to the Participants' Language and Culture** - Brief overview of the three languages, their history, and cultural significance for the three countries.	20/06/2024	09:30 – 12:00	UCLan Cyprus campus

		Basic Language Skills - Interactive sessions covering essential phrases, greetings, and expressions. **Conversational Practice** - Engaging activities to practice conversational skills in the three languages. **Cultural Insights** - Presentation on the three countries' customs, traditions, and contemporary culture. **Language Games** - Fun and educational games to reinforce language learning in an enjoyable way.		(CY Time)	
Cultural Event 5	Visit to Hala Sultan Tekke and Larnaca Salt Lake & Dinner at Mackenzie Beach	A captivating excursion to **Hala Sultan Tekke** and the adjacent **Larnaca Salt Lake** for a tranquil journey through history and nature. The afternoon begins by visiting Hala Sultan Tekke, a revered Muslim shrine nestled beside the serene waters of the Salt Lake. We will explore the peaceful grounds of this sacred site, admiring its graceful architecture and soaking in the spiritual atmosphere. Afterward, we will venture to the nearby Larnaca Salt Lake, where the landscape transforms with the shifting seasons. The day concludes with dinner at **Mackenzie Beach** where you can savour fresh seafood dishes while enjoying the soothing sound of waves lapping against the shore.	20/06/2024	18:00 – 21:30 (CY Time)	Larnaca
Workshop 9	Collaborative Learning	**Introduction to Collaborative Learning** Benefits of Collaborative Learning **Strategies for Effective Collaboration** Facilitating Collaborative Learning **Utilising Technology for Collaboration** Assessing Collaborative Learning **Case Studies and Examples**	21/06/2024	09:30 – 12:00 (CY Time)	UCLan Cyprus campus

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Cultural Event 6	Cultural Fusion Party	**Celebration of Greek and partner universities' Cultures** - Decorations reflecting both Greek and partners' traditions. **Live Performances** - Traditional dance and music performances from both cultures. **Culinary Delights** - Buffet with a diverse array of traditional dishes. **Beverage Tasting** - Sampling traditional drinks from the three cultures. **Language Exchange Corner** - Informal language exchange sessions for participants to practice what they have learned. **Cultural Booths** - Stalls with artifacts, information, and displays showcasing Greek-Cypriot and partner HEI's heritage. **Closing Remarks and Thank You** - Acknowledgment of participants, facilitators, and organisers, expressing gratitude for a successful cultural exchange.	21/06/2024	18:30 – 20:00 (CY Time)	UCLan Cyprus campus

6. Evaluation

1. Pre- and post-workshop surveys to assess participants' knowledge and skills.

2. Participant feedback collected after each workshop and at the end of the programme.

3. Evaluation of cultural exchange activities and language workshops.

4. Long-term monitoring of participants' professional development and implementation of learned strategies in their institutions.

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7. Certificate of Participation

Participants in the Erasmus+ project Academic Excellence and Cultural Exchange will be awarded certificates of participation at the conclusion of the programme. These certificates serve as a testament to their active engagement and dedication to fostering collaborative learning environments and promoting cultural exchange within higher education.

8. Conclusion

The Erasmus+ project Academic Excellence and Cultural Exchange offers an innovative approach to enhancing academic excellence and promoting cultural exchange among staff members from UCLan and its two partner universities. By combining online and face-to-face activities, the programme aims to address key challenges in higher education while fostering a collaborative and inclusive learning environment.

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