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Joint training concept on integration and academic success

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Introduction

EU-CONEXUS is committed to creating a new institutional framework for higher education in Europe, and the internationalisation of our universities is being one of the main challenges face today, not only at the academic and administrative level but also in terms of linguistic and cultural integration, so the way in which we solve these obstacles and the feeling of belonging and support that is provided to the international students during their academic path is crucial for the success of our students' community.



Joint Master programme in Marine Biotechnology (JMPMB) was created under European Universities Initiative Alliance 'European University for Smart Urban Coastal Sustainability (EU-CONEXUS)' and is truly integrated joint programme not only in the way of students enrolment and curriculum, but also students management and inter-campus services.

Students of joint programmes stand out by its national diversity, many of them study in more than 2 and even 3 countries different from its origin and changing the hosting university (and country) every semester. Therefore joint integration and academic supervision approach is crucial to smoothen student's 'journey' throughout the study itinerary and to create a stronger belonging to the joint programme's consortium.

Joint training concept on integration and academic success embeds inter-institutional effort to provide coordinated and integrated academic success related services and integration programme to students, believing that coordinated effort leads to higher integration and thus to a better academic performance.

This conceptual roadmap is intended to serve as a guide for better success in student life mainly focus on integration and academic success of international students based in JMPMB 2 years practice and experience, supported by a strong European Universities Alliance vision; and may serve as an inspiration to other consortium, planning their own joint programme's activities.

Concept

EU-CONEXUS sees the necessity of guiding and supporting the students **from admission to graduation, and even after**.

The Joint training concept on integration and academic success consists of **3 types** of activities to support (Fig. 1):

- **Cultural integration**
- **Academic integration**
- **Academic success**

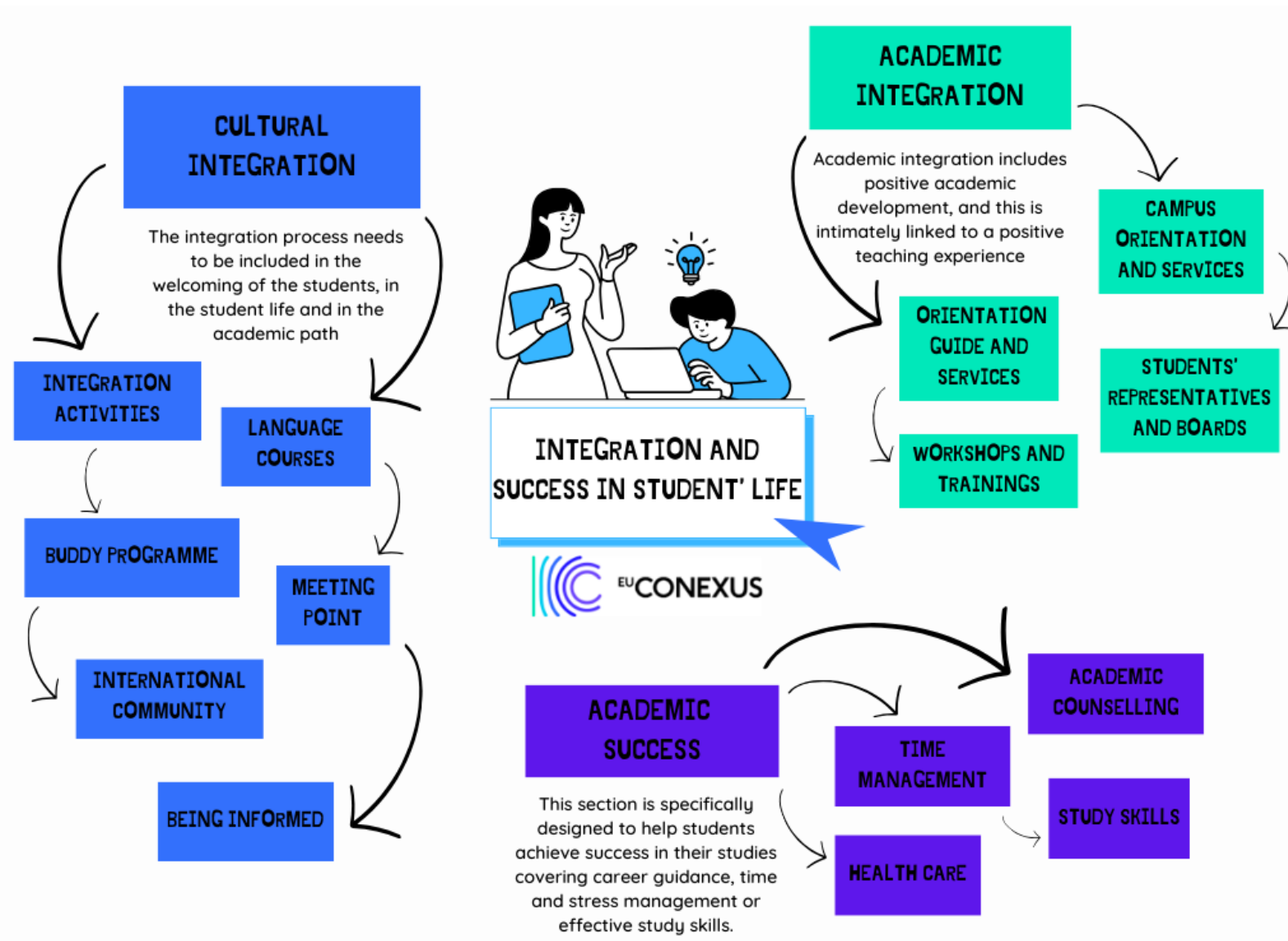


Fig. 1. Types of activities to support integration and academic success.

It is important to note that all partners, participating in the Joint Master programme in Marine Biotechnology must participate and contribute to this programme as the consortium and as institution, providing the services when the student is there.

JOINT MASTER PROGRAMME IN MARINE BIOTECHNOLOGY

ROAD MAP

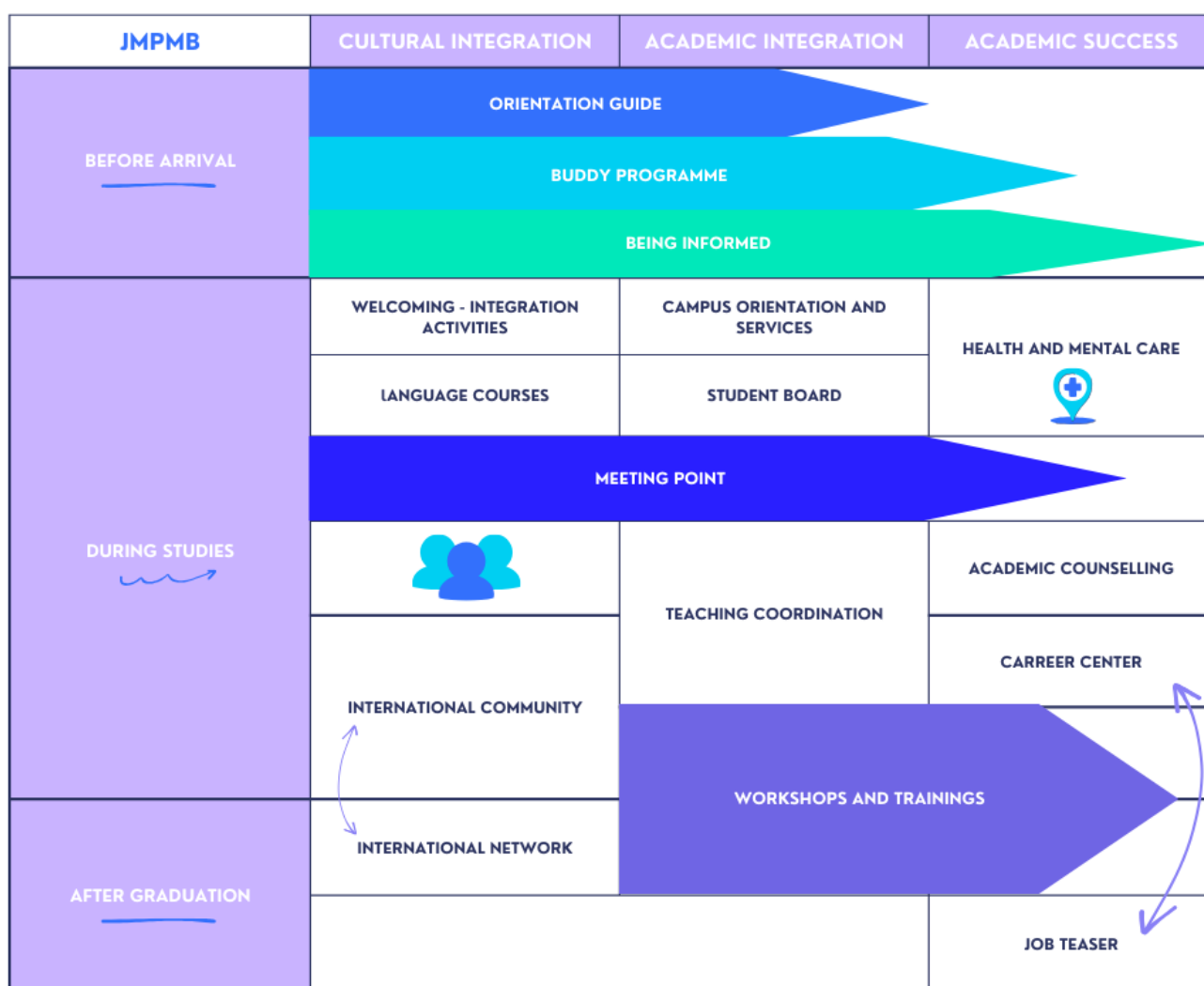


Fig. 2. Road Map of the Joint Programme Master in Marine Biotechnology.

The activities described further on may be implemented as joint (consortium) effort and are applied to all students no matter at which university they currently at, or institutional effort once the student is studying at the hosting university.

Integration

An important transformation has been promoted in European and International education towards a **more plural and inclusive framework, where not only students but also citizens are trained**, and the final result will depend a lot on the response obtained from their environment.

For this reason, the integration process needs to be included in the welcoming of the students, in the student life and in the academic path as part of this international context, facilitating intercultural collaborations and academic success.

Welcome Week (5 days) organised by first hosting university to all new intake students typically covers major general aspects of the programme, prepares to the integrated and personalised pathway of each student, gives cultural and academic guidelines, and, of course, gives an introduction to the hosting university and the city.

Welcome Day (1 day) organised by all host universities starting from the 2nd semester is given to the students currently visiting a university and has a more institutionalised aspect of the interaction.

Cultural integration

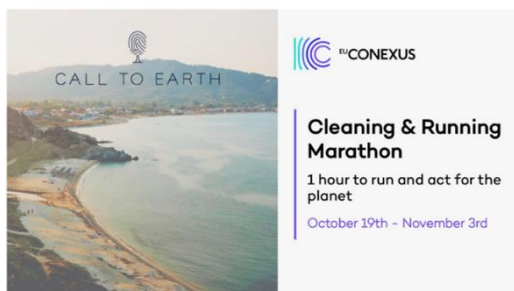
Different studies identify that integration is mainly facilitated in extracurricular activities, and according to this is highly recommended to promote a programme of integration into university life (at different levels) through, for example, sport, cultural or gastronomical activities, a welcome day or languages courses; in the end, integration activities where we encourage the international relations between a multicultural community.

— Integration activities.

EU-CONEXUS is passionate about promoting European culture, including language, gastronomy, and all other aspects of life. It is highly recommended that before regular lessons begin, activities to try to facilitate the integration not only with their new colleagues, but also the integration in the campus life or the integration in the new country and culture be proposed to new students.

Sport is well known for bringing people together, sparking connections, and helping to develop a sense of affiliation. In order to promote EU-CONEXUS sports activities and sport teams, a diverse bunch of activities are proposed such as EU-CONEXUS Final Sport Games. However, is also important to encourage students to join the activities proposed in each Institution.

Sustainability, and academic activities need to be also promoted.



As examples of activities for integration that we apply in our Joint Programme are volleyball matches on the beach, international dinner (where the students can bring their own local dish and taste and share

— Buddy programme

The Buddy programme is a voluntary programme to help integration of new students.

An international student attending classes in another university different to her/his Home University, have numerous questions and doubts, and these have to be solved by someone expert in the field, even before arrival to the new Host University, and what is better that someone that already go through the same or that already know the campus? Thus, a Buddy becomes a mentor in order to ensure faster adaptation to the new surroundings.

The Buddy system is essential to student life but also help students with paperwork, mobility and going through the language barrier in a smoother way. According to this, Buddy programme is not only

other international products), bike tours around the city, surfing and climbing activities, tour around campus and facilities, workshops or information seminars to present all services at their disposal. In the following lines are exposed some more examples of cultural integration's actions to carry out related with science and sustainability:

- Women in sciences' conference
- Week of sciences
- Blue Innovation Day
- Scientific expositions in the campus
- Beach Clean-up



important for cultural integration but also for academic success.

EU-CONEXUS promote this system, where the students are able to connect to their colleagues and share their own knowledge and experiences about each partner institution. By connecting to each other, this system creates a sense of camaraderie and belonging to the same university.

— Language courses

Perfectly distributed across Europe, EU-CONEXUS students, teachers, researchers, and staff are studying, teaching, conducting their research activities, innovating, and working on a European scale with [English as common language](#). In the case of programs like the Joint Master Programme in Marine Biotechnology, integration into a multicultural environment becomes difficult. The language barrier is a big challenge in both cultural and academic integration.

[Host institution language](#). If we talk about cultural integration, it is of great value that the Host Institution offers language immersion programs adapted to international incoming students' study plan. This will help to

international incoming students come from a wide variety of nationalities, consequently the use of English as a vehicular language will facilitate interactions between students and staff.

When English is not the common language of communication,

better integrate into the culture and environment that surrounds them, and when they feel more comfortable in this area, their performance increases, as well as their sense of belonging and promotion of the program. Acquire a new language certificate in each institution that they visit is a plus for their CV but is, on top of all,

a nice challenge!

— International community

Collaboration with international associations in charge of promote different multicultural actions or events between students is a must. This is quite important during the welcoming of the students. A clear example of this could be the [Erasmus Student Network association](#). This is one of the biggest student associations in Europe and are present in more than 1000 Higher Education Institutions from over 40 countries. ESN is operating on three levels: local, national, and international and for this reason is highly recommended for Cultural integration of international students.

The international relations office and the staff related to international affairs are one of the main references

for international students, therefore they have to be accessible and familiar for students, consequently, involve them in some activities could be beneficial.

[EU-CONEXUS](#) highlights the culture and the multiculturalism of its project and those who are part of it with events and festivals such as the EU-CONEXUS Festival based on the (co)production and presentation of cultural and artistic projects, scientific culture initiatives, research-based activities as well as the participation to side activities such as sport challenges that create synergy between all actors of the Alliance. Check this interesting section here: <https://www.eu-conexus.eu/en/culture/>

— Meeting point

One of the points of reference for international students, as already mentioned above, should be the international relations office, or the place where they can receive personalized information, but they should also have points of relaxing where they can work on their projects or tasks, meet people and share experiences.

For this reason, it is considered necessary to have coworking spaces for student interaction, or videoconferencing rooms, which, for example, can be booked in advance so that they can be managed more efficiently.

Other rooms or spaces, such as the cultural activities room, can be a good option for the personal and artistic development of students to be considered in the students' life.



- Being informed

For the integration of a student in students' life, as in society in general, being informed and sharing their experiences is very important. This is why we rely on social networks, so we can share our achievements and progress with the rest of the world. Having a common social network makes it easier for the university's community to be informed but also to increase their networking.

The most used options are Instagram, Facebook, Tiktok, Youtube, LinkedIn, Twitter among others.

Having an attractive and up-to-date website is vital to attract interest and promote the program, [we invite you to check ours!](#)

<https://www.eu-conexus.eu/en/>

[@eu_conexus](#)

EU-CONEXUS Open Day. Day dedicated to both, students and staff of the different institutions inside and outside the alliance, help to better understand EU-CONEXUS and benefit in the dissemination, better understanding and promotion of this joint project.

Academic integration

Academic integration **includes positive academic development, and this is intimately linked to a positive teaching experience.** Different strategies can be used by institutions to accompany students in a successful academic integration, below are some of the measures implemented by EU-CONEXUS.

— Campus orientation and services

It is recommended that the first few days after the arrival of the students (during welcome day or welcome week), a tour of the campus is carried out and maps are provided, if necessary, in order to easily locate the services offered by the host institution.

The introduction of the staff (administrative and academic) to the students is important to know who they should contact and to make communications more personal thus reinforcing the feeling of belonging to a community. **If the staff is committed to the program, students will be too,** for example, knowing students by name or being easily accessible to inquiries outside the classroom will strengthen the student's relationship with the programme.

A proactivity of the services will help to carry out the procedures on time and anticipate the possible challenges and doubts that students may face, taking into account that for many of them the cultural and academic shock can be important generating stress. The fact that the staff in direct contact with the students has an in-depth knowledge of the procedures and can guide and help the students will be transformed into a favourable

academic integration and therefore their academic success will also be favoured.

Clear and visible information concerning students, such as through platforms, bulletin boards, or screens, will help the student stay on top of deadlines and new opportunities.

Students with specific needs are very welcome to our community. **EU-CONEXUS** will establish a targeted reorientation and study support service by taking into account individual achievements. Focusing on that we will accomplishing individual education and training needs of disadvantaged social groups or students with special needs. This joint project aims at developing a disability-inclusive higher education environment in order to ensure that students with disabilities are not excluded from higher education and that their potential is realised.



— Orientation guide

In relation to the previous point, a guide with useful information before and after the student's arrival at the Host Institution will make this beneficial proactivity bidirectional. Check out the following link to see our guide to the Joint Master Programme in Marine Biotechnology <https://www.eu-conexus.eu/en/master-3/students-toolkit/>

This guide should contain practical information about the program such as necessary documentation, visa application, mobility scheme, academic calendar, career and academic support, etc.

A good idea obtained from the feedback of the students is that, apart from this guide with practical information, a road map of both the

administrative procedures and the academic path is established that will be very visual and schematic for them.

Information webinar/meetings may be held throughout the process, for example during the call, and which will help applicants to learn more about the program and clearly decide if they want to join it. These will serve to know in more detail the procedures they will face, how the development of their classes and syllabus will be, how their nearest future will develop (next semesters).

Having a global vision and being well supported from the beginning will place the student in a more relaxed position, so the chances of a successful academic integration with the achievement of good results increase.

— Teaching coordination

To improve understanding and adaptation to the curriculum, it is very important that there is a person who coordinates or supervises the organization of the content to be taught and establishes a schedule that follows a logical line of development, avoiding repetitions or overlapping of content. This is something to keep in mind especially when the number of external lecturers or professors involved is high and when the students come from different educational fields, but not only.

Creating a friendly and personal environment with students helps in the transfer of knowledge in both directions, not only to the student but also to the teacher, who will be able to

adjust their teaching strategies to enhance student learning.

These coordinators will be the liaison between students or their delegates and higher levels of academic coordination and will avoid diffuse, incomplete or erroneous information.

Among their coordination functions, they must inform students at the beginning of classes about the development of the course, the subject, what the evaluation methods will be, where they can find information related to the syllabus or how to access bibliographic resources.

This will give students the guidelines and tools to successfully complete the academic related.

Academic achievement sometimes depends on frequent supervisor meetings and interactions, timely feedback on the task given,

help in their academic development and success in a very direct way.

Regular meetings with the students



motivation, and encouragement to lecturers and students involved.

We must not forget that within the academic coordination we must reserve time for rest and personal development of the student. This will

will give us a lot of information about how they are facing their academic training or the problems they are going through, which gives us invaluable feedback for the immediate improvement of the program.

— Students' representatives and other boards

As stated above, it is important that students have representation so that when it comes to providing their feedback or expressing their doubts, it is done in a clear and direct way. They will be in charge of bringing to light the needs of the students, the challenges they are encountering and elevating them to coordinators, supervisors or other agencies.

It is recommended that in the first weeks of class, delegates who will be in charge of representing the students

are established by voting and by a transparent and fair procedure.

These elected members will be part of other bodies where student representation is necessary, such as the Joint External Advisory Board, which is responsible for providing assistance on topics such as the academic content of the program, the quality system, and has an important role in the promotion of the program or in the creation of an international network of contacts.

Buddy programme is not only transcendental when it comes to the cultural integration of international students, but it is also of vital importance when it comes to

— Workshops and trainings

For a complete Academic Career, not only the content taught is important, but also the extracurricular merits that can provide other skills and knowledge that facilitate the professional development of the student. Offer the possibility of workshops and training on specific topics, can also improve the academic integration.

Having an agenda of focused workshops and trainings is a great advantage when it comes to generating good professionals. For this reason, EU-CONEXUS regularly launches diverse proposals. You can check them out here <https://www.eu-conexus.eu/en/news-events/>

Among their joint academic offers, EU-CONEXUS is also developing workshops and seminars for high schools. Therefore, partners came up with the idea of the International EU-CONEXUS School Contest ‘Think Smart, Create Green’.

Is one initiative to bring the EU-CONEXUS project closer to secondary education pupils, to raise awareness about the sustainability of coastal areas and promote marine environmental consciousness through a specific but also a pan-European approach and to encourage them to study STEM-related degrees and

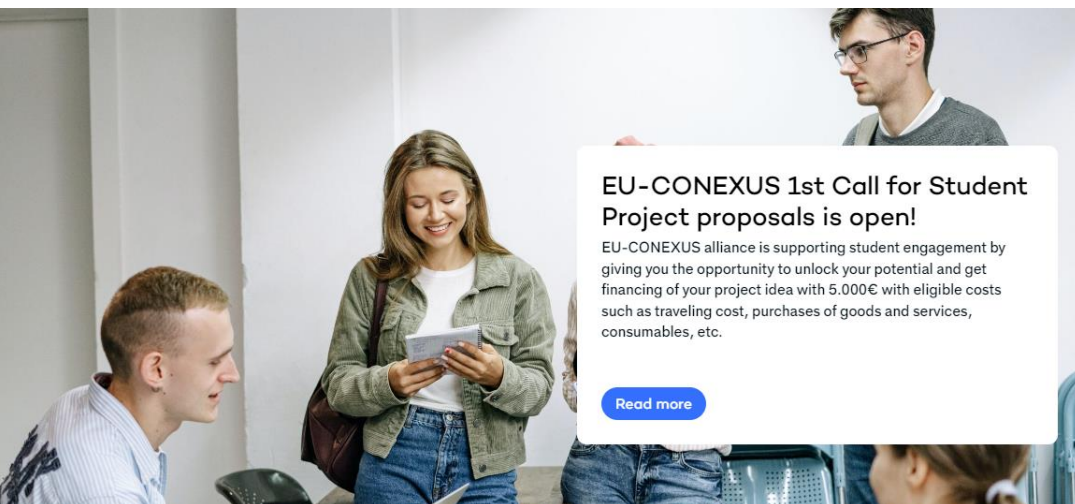
preparing documentation, dealing with different procedures, knowing the academic options available or exchanging tips, advice, and experiences.

introduce future careers in related industries.

This is aligned with one of the main goals of the EU-CONEXUS consortium which is raising awareness about the challenges faced by urbanized coastal areas in Europe and inspiring society to look for solutions to apply environmentally friendly principles in their daily life.



Entrepreneurship. EU-CONEXUS is committed not only to creating good professionals with quality education but also to designing the citizens of the future, and this is intimately linked to the work environment and entrepreneurship. For this reason, calls such as Student Project have recently been born. Check some of our workshops in the following banners.



EU-CONEXUS 1st Call for Student Project proposals is open!

EU-CONEXUS alliance is supporting student engagement by giving you the opportunity to unlock your potential and get financing of your project idea with 5.000€ with eligible costs such as traveling cost, purchases of goods and services, consumables, etc.

[Read more](#)



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Practical course on Aquaculture by the Agricultural University of Athens



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6 JUNE 2023

Registration available till 26 May 2023
Call for abstracts till 15 May 2023

Academic Success

This section is specifically designed to **help students achieve success in their studies and professional search** from an academic point of view, and therefore covers topics such as career guidance, time and stress management or effective study skills.

— Academic counselling

EU-CONEXUS joint programme universities created a network of support for the students while they are studying or visiting particular (host) university.

Academic toolkit, available on EU-CONEXUS Moodle and sent to each admitted student explains **joint academic processes**: grading system, academic calendars, choosing JMPMB tracks, etc.

We acknowledge that close guiding and counselling is needed when a student is at concrete host university. Therefore, JMPMB appoints **Academic tutor** at each university. The Academic tutor answers specific host university related questions on

- Academic regulations
- Tutoring
- Timetables, professors, internships
- Suggestions, complaints about the study part.

The tutors supervise and monitors academic success throughout the semester to prevent from possible academic failure and provides support in the academic way.

The Academic tutors are coordinated by JMPMB Academic Coordinator, so all consortium partners are in line with the process and learn from each other too.

— Professional counselling

EU-CONEXUS Smart Campus platforms and services throughout the studies will help the student to prepare their self to make their own CV and be competitive in the labour market:

– **EU-CONEXUS University-Industry platform** to facilitate the search for internships and to receive

counselling on CV writing, job and internship search and other topics of interest will also be used for project development and Academic Research Integration course.

– **EU-CONEXUS Mentoring platform** will provide you mentoring in the following areas of interest: academic, research, career, entrepreneurship guidance.

Career centre Job Teaser. The high inclusion of the stakeholders into the teaching and learning process of the courses will facilitate better integration in the labour market.

EU-CONEXUS has gathered the Career Centres of all partner universities to

jointly share experience from working with students and employers to help them to explore their options and links with industry. We want all our EU-CONEXUS European University students to benefit from international jobs and have access to as much information and resources as possible.

We have created an EU-CONEXUS Career Centre space on the Job Teaser platform where each European University student can register and explore all the listed companies to get the perfect job or internship. Our careers advisors are available for meetings to help you explore your options, develop your employability skills to make successful job applications, and attend job fairs.

[Join our Career Center here!](https://eu-conexus.jobteaser.com)



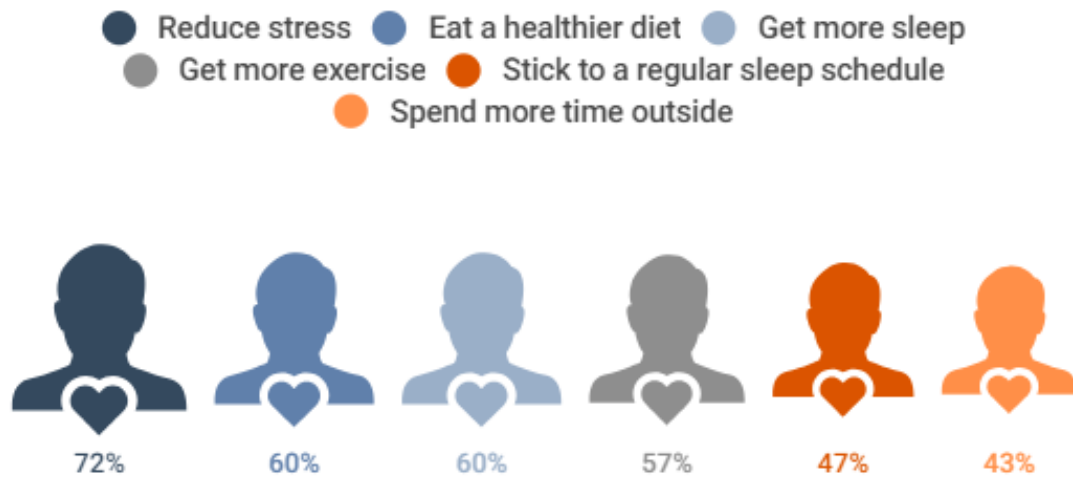
— Health and mental Care

Provide a Health insurance and phycological assistance on campus is a plus for all students.

Healthy students are better learners, and academic achievement bears a lifetime of benefits for health. This health care includes stress

management, mental health and physical wellness. This link between health and academic success is even more palpable in the case of students with specific needs. According to a study provided by Porter Bischoff of

Utah Valley University, the top goals for Student in terms of Health are:



And if we, once again fear the opinion of students as the most valuable feedback, we must take into account that stress reduction, along with diet and good rest are essential to improve their academic success, which is why

EU-CONEXUS seeks, with the help of students, to search for the best balance in terms of teaching load, rest time and stress management, although this sometimes becomes an arduous task due to the academic calendar.

— Stress and time management

Nowadays we lead a fast life that negatively affects our health, and the academic period could not be less. A new country, a new education system, new classmates, homework, exams, it all adds up. Stress is pervasive in our

lives and... **If you can't beat the enemy, join him!** Therefore, numerous techniques have been developed to control stress and minimize it. Here are some of our recommendations:

Stress management

- 1 Think positive
- 2 Learn to say NO
- 3 Ask for help
- 4 Don't procrastinate
- 5 Set realistic expectations
- 6 Make a to-do list

Stress management

- 7 Take a break to relax and refresh /do something that you enjoy
- 8 Practice relaxation techniques
- 9 Manage your time
- 10 Exercise
- 11 Get plenty of rest
- 12 Eat a healthy diet

If you are interested in now more about stress management, here some interesting adresses and

apps: [Tips to Lower Stress](#), [Fight stress with healthy habits](#), [Breathe2Relax](#), [Meditation Oasis](#), [Empower youth mental health](#).

Time management is intimately related to stress, the better we know how to manage our time, the greater the chances of reducing stress. Having good time management skills during your academic path is the easiest way to stablish a good balance between

your academic activities, the work load and your responsibilities out of the academic environment. Here some interesting links: [Time Management Tips for Busy Students](#), [11 Time Management Tips to Work Less & Play More](#)

— Study skills

Finally, within the section dedicated to students, we must talk about another term closely related to academic success and that would serve to close the cycle between time management and stress; This would be how to study in a more efficient way.

Based on the fact that each student can have and/or learn study techniques, certain points have been defined that have been proven to have a positive influence on the effectiveness of study. They are as follows:

Planned your schedule. Organised yourself in advance helps to achieve your learning goals and reduce stress. Be aware about the best time of the day for you and study in two-hours blocks with 30 minutes breaks in between.

Don't skip class. It is important for your academic success have all the information and content teach by your professors, so, don't skip classes!

Learn from general to the specific. Start with basic concepts and go deep in your knowledge step by step. Try to slice the content in smaller pieces.

Don't read but study. Creating associations, maps and diagrams and formulating question and looking for additional materials. **Test yourself!**

Check your tech and space. Have a good connexion and/or computer is always a good tool to study, also avoid distractions, use a quite and relaxing environment to study. There are many apps designed to productivity-boosting for example [study](#).