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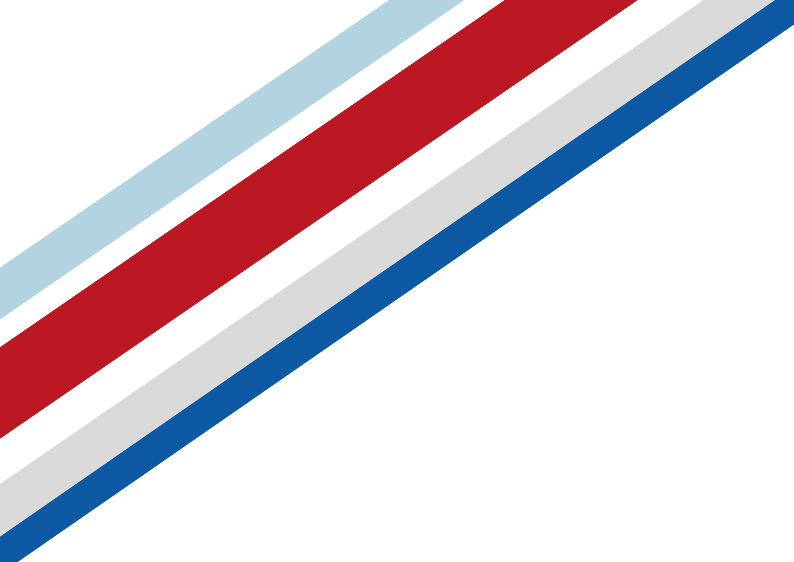
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BEST PRACTICE GUIDE:

“MANAGEMENT OF SOCIAL AND INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION”

IVAC Project (2021-2022)

Communication and Society in Ibero-America



The following Best Practice Guide was developed for the online course “Management of social and intercultural communication”, which is part of the International Virtual Academic Collaboration CS@Ibero-America project. It was elaborated by consensus between the teachers and students.

The teaching body comes from three different universities from Germany and Chile collaborating internationally: Heidelberg University, Universidad de Chile, and Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile.

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Table of contents

1	Interpersonal skills	Technical aspects	4
2	Operational aspects	Workload	5
3	Contents of the Course	Evaluation & Feedback	6



Introduction

This Best Practice document performs a dual function:

- It serves as a background document for future editions of the course or as a reference for other institutions that want to conduct collaborative online teaching projects internationally.
- It serves as a tool for self-evaluation, reinforcing the strengths of the course and improving those aspects where necessary.

Teaching that brings together students and teachers from different countries poses logistical and intercultural challenges. The final purpose of this document is, therefore, to establish a minimum framework that serves as a model for understanding collaborative online teaching within an international and intercultural context.

This Best Practice Guide resulted from numerous work sessions in the workshop for the CS@Ibero-America's project closure. During these sessions, the functioning of the online course and the overall project was analysed by students and teachers. Gathering input information from all the participants enabled us to draft the report together.



Interpersonal skills

Respect: it entails becoming aware that all people belonging to a community are different and that regardless of the role they play in it, all of them deserve to be treated with respect using appropriate verbal and non-verbal language.

Equality and integration: everyone has the right to receive equal and respectful treatment, and the existing diversity within the community is a factor that enriches coexistence and relationships.

Dialogue: the virtual classroom shall constitute a space where open dialogue and a free exchange of opinions are encouraged and promoted within a framework of general respect.

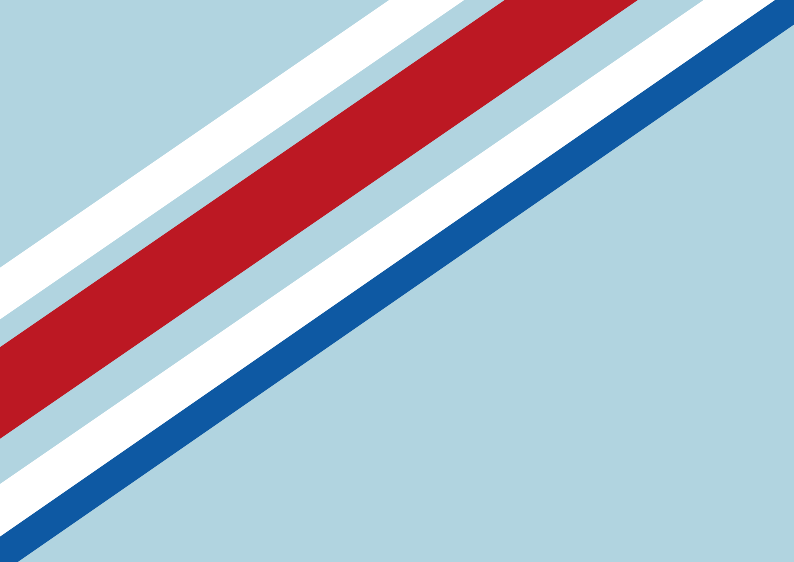
Formality: the virtual classroom is a space of formal treatment where teachers and students must respect the established deadlines, use the appropriate communication channels, employ appropriate language, and foster active and respectful listening.

Empathy and solidarity: the virtual classroom must be a space where other people's emotions are taken into account to avoid prejudices and where the intercultural differences, which enrich coexistence, must be considered. Moreover, a good treatment is based on mutual support and collaboration in the process of creating a collective space.



Operational aspects

- Inform if the classes will be recorded or not in order to sign a previous consent form to ensure that the students have a clear understanding about it and ensure that they can access the contents in case they cannot attend the class.
- The delivery dates of lectures and assignments should be clear before the course starts. It is, therefore, necessary to provide an official calendar from the beginning.
- In case the courses offered are attended by students from different time zones, it is necessary to clarify the schedule of each course.
- The course format should be clearly described in terms of whether the sessions will be conducted synchronously or asynchronously.
- The academic profiles of the students and the different language levels have to be taken into account.

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- The crediting and the different possibilities of recognition of academic achievements must be clearly defined, specifying which modules are recognised (if applicable) in each case.
 - There must be clear transparency about which students have to take which modules (in the event that the course does not require to complete all the modules).
 - It is necessary to set clear attendance policies.
 - If applicable, the implications of failing or changing modules should be clarified.
 - Ensure that the administrative procedures and credit recognition of the course are acknowledged at each university.



Contents of the course

- Exploit the innovation potential of the course's nature regarding the content.
- It is recommended to insert contextual texts between modules if they cover topics that are only slightly related to each other.
- Each module's contents should not differ greatly in terms of extent.
- The mandatory and suggested bibliographic material must be consistent in terms of quantity among the different modules.
- It is suggested to include an orientating video in the welcome module to explain the general functioning of the course: time slots and work modes, type of modules, and workload. In this way, a clear initial structure is provided.

Technical aspects

- The resources of the different modules should either be open access or, if they are not, the student's access to them should be guaranteed.
- The distribution of content and resources on the platform must be transparent and concise. Additional instructions must be added whenever necessary.
- It is suggested that the account to access the conference platform is the same for all the modules.
- It is suggested that a technical coordinator provides support with matters related to the platform, connection problems, and other technical issues that may arise.
- It is recommended to arrange participatory mechanisms in the synchronous sessions and to agree on criteria for the type of attendance (cameras on or off, engagement via chat, etc.)

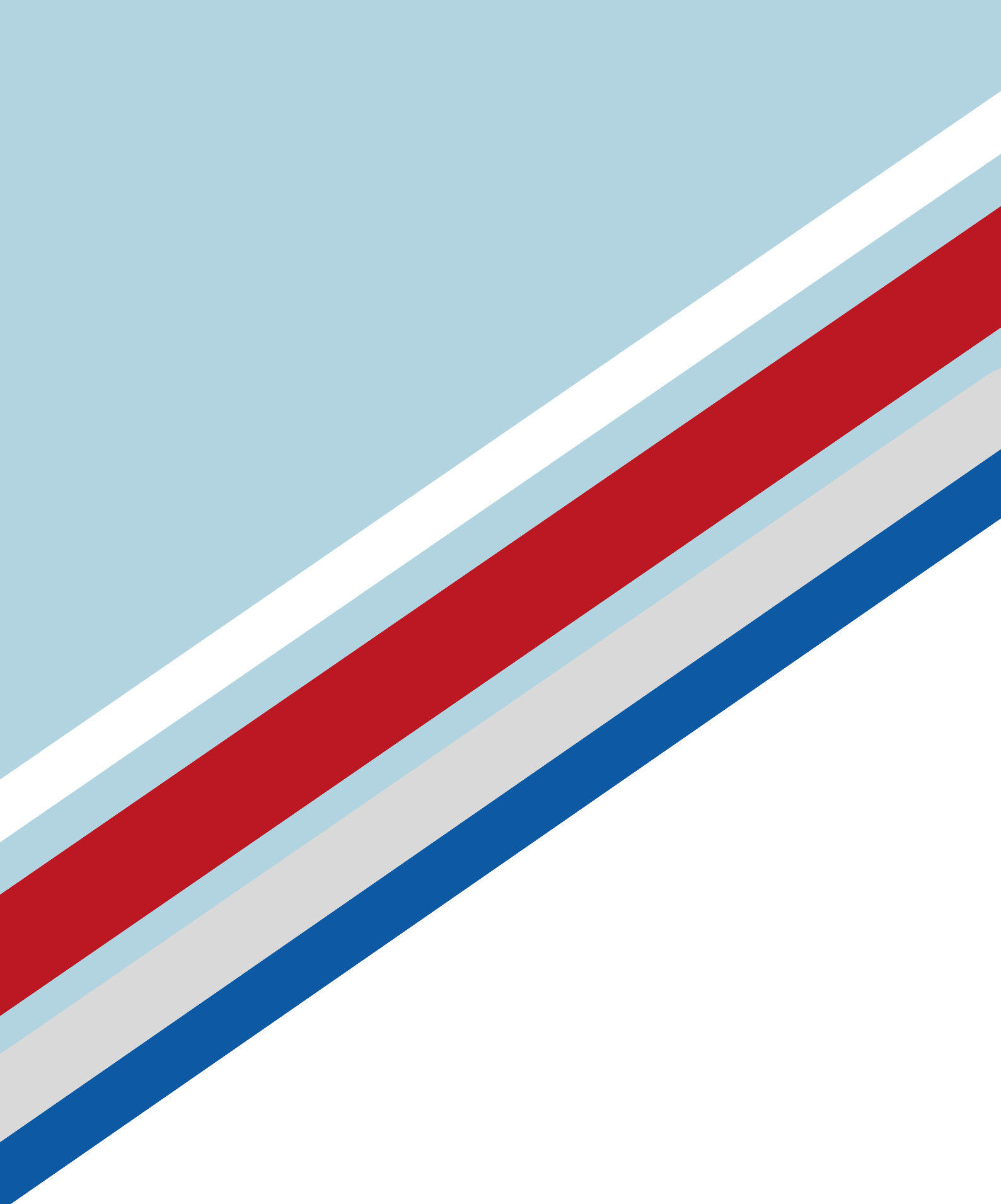


Workload

- The workload criteria for each module in relation to the corresponding credit points should be standardised clearly, including a description of synchronous workload and independent work.
- Tasks may vary, as recommended, but there must be coherent criteria in terms of time, workload, and extent.

Evaluation & Feedback

- Continuous evaluation is recommended, whereby the total workload (depending on the number of modules and content) must be determined.
- The evaluations must account for the gradual learning process within the study block.
- The instructions and evaluation criteria must be self-explanatory from the beginning of the course in the synchronous sessions, where there must be enough time to answer the student's questions and queries.
- Agree on criteria to ensure a consistent feedback culture.
- Agree upon common criteria for grading and communicating the marks, considering the intercultural elements, for example, when developing a template or using any tool for additional monitoring in an online format. The students must be properly informed about these aspects
- Present clearly the equivalence of grades and credits if it is different among the participating countries and institutions
- Clearly state the policies related to late submissions.



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