

My Favorite Assignment

Facilitators Briefing

Virtual Business Professional: Means of Honing Business Students' Cross-cultural Virtual Communication Skills

Aiste Ptakauske

Vilnius Gediminas Technical University, Lithuania

Assignment overview

Students from various international schools work together through a virtual communication platform hosted and maintained by the University of Southern California's Marshall School Virtual Business Professional (VBP) program.

The students were divided into international teams of 5-7

No 2-students in 1-team could be from the same geographical location.

The students were required to use slack.com, jargon.ai, and Google Translate.

Teams held a minimum of 3 virtual meetings over the course of six weeks.

Intermediary assignments:

- A team charter with each team member's roles and tasks, ground rules of the team's collaboration, and the team's communication protocol (a template of the team charter is found in Support Materials)
- Individual preparation for a virtual team meeting with arguments in favor of one client that the team should take on (instructions for this preparation will be provided in the Support Materials)
- The first draft of the collaborative report
- The final draft of the collaborative report

The breakdown of all academic activities of the VBP project according to weeks will be provided in the Support Materials.

- An essential part of the process was students' weekly and end-of-the-project reflections of their progress. This way, necessary social skills were taught, practiced, and processed (not just assumed!).

The cooperative learning method has proven to be instrumental in this process. According to this method, instructors should create the following conditions for their students that work on group assignments to ensure the best learning experience for them:

- Set academic and social goals
- Define an appropriate size of student teams
- Form diverse teams
- Prepare space and tools
- Initiate teambuilding activities
- Discuss student team members' roles and responsibilities
- Set clear criteria for success
- Monitor, reflect on and, if necessary, intervene into the teamwork
- Assess both academic achievements and the process of teamwork according to the set criteria

For more detailed instructions on how to use the cooperative learning method in group assignments, see:

https://www.instructionalleadership.ie/images/pdfs/barriebooks/Barrie_Bennett_Cooperative_Learning.compressed.pdf

It is important to note that the cooperative learning method was originally designed for in-class group assignments. However, the application of this method to the VBP project shows that it can be successfully used for virtual group assignments too.

To locate and coordinate with collaborating faculty in other institutions, instructors should use this website: <https://www.marshall.usc.edu/departments/business-communication/vbp-project>