

A photograph of a computer lab with several students working at desks. In the foreground, a student in a red shirt is focused on his work. Behind him, other students are visible, some looking at their screens. The room is filled with computer monitors and keyboards, suggesting a learning environment for technology or virtual reality.

The student experience of virtual mobility - Findings from the Victorious case studies

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Victorious – Student experiences

Aims



“To investigate student experiences of ICT when studying abroad”

- Returners from an Erasmus or other exchange visit
- Students arriving to begin a period of study at another university



Victorious – Student experiences

Methods

- Depth and breadth –interviews first to inform survey
 - 2 - 7 student interviews conducted at each partner university
 - Most were video recorded
 - Individual or group interviews
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- Key themes: culture, access, support, resources and information
 - Data from 17 universities
 - Video clips identified
 - Some variations in approach/interpretation



Victorious – Student experiences

Video Clip 1 & 2



Victorious – Student experiences

Enablers & Barriers to Student Integration

Enablers

- Information before arrival
- In-depth student inductions
- Extent and range of ICT
- Globalised ICT systems
- Students adaptability
- Helpful tutors, students
- Well organised courses

Barriers

- Poor communications between departments & students
- Lack of flexibility – rules & regulations
- Culture shock - expectations in host univ.
- Social isolation
- Incompatibility of programmes
- Lack of course organisation



Victorious – Student experiences

“The university was very well prepared for foreign students, many activities were organized and there is a housing service especially for them...”

“Students received all information before they went to the host university: subject, credits, etc....”

“The Helpdesk was almost always available and very helpful”

“sometimes the examination date and time could be changed on the spot!”

“...bureaucratic...intercultural introduction would have helped.. it was a culture shock”..

“she was offered a 10 a free ten week course but it was not helpful, involved watching the Simpsons in [the language]!....”



Victorious – Student experiences

What access is there to digital resources / services?

Spaces

- PC rooms
- Libraries and digital libraries
- Computer centres / helpdesks
- Computers in student rooms



Services

- Email
- Web resources
- E-learning platforms / courses / materials
- Personal digital information (grades / ECTS credits)
- Facilities: Printing, disk space, downloading, saving to pen drive etc.

Victorious – Student experiences

Resources: PC rooms

- Available but very different access modalities

..From 24 hours a day / no queue / fast connections

..To restricted opening hours / time limits / queues / slow connections

- Difficulties with passwords or permission to use a PC room

“I needed a special card, but the office I could get the card from was open only when I had to attend classes”

- Use of PCs is felt as a necessity

“I was part of an Internet Project before leaving .. but I had no connection”





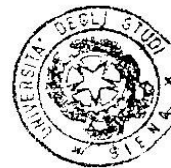
AREA SERVIZI AGLI STUDENTI
SETTORE SOCRATES/ERASMUS

matricola n.ER04430

A richiesta dell'interessata, visti gli atti d'ufficio, si attesta che la studentessa
di nazionalità nata a il inviata presso questa
università per l'A.A. 2005/06 dall' Università di nell'ambito del programma
ERASMUS della Unione Europea svolge attività di studio nel periodo 29.08.05-01.07.06
presso la Facoltà di LETTERE E FILOSOFIA.

Si rilascia la presente attestazione in carta libera per gli usi per i quali la legge non
prescrive il bollo.

Siena, 7 settembre 2005



IL RESPONSABILE
SOCRATES/ERASMUS

Karla O'Connell

Victorious – Student experiences

Resources: Libraries and Digital Libraries

- Information not always in English
- Induction not always given
- Access to PCs / journals sometimes requires a password / LAN
- Many students don't feel it is a priority
- but find online resources very useful when they realize they are available

“ I didn't know I could read journals online ... I hope I can do it also when I go back to my university”



Victorious – Student experiences

Helpdesk

- Normally friendly and useful, when available/requested
- Some cultural problems / web access restrictions

“I think the man in the computer lab can see what we do online”

Computers in student rooms

- Useful but .. They don't seem to expect this kind of service, yet.

VLEs: Different systems in home and host university

- Usability and familiarity of systems
- Login problems



Victorious – Student experiences

VLE Access issues

Students normally have access to the same courses and materials online as local students but...

Not always easy or immediate

- *“No Web CT [VLE], no portal just traditional noticeboards”*
- Credits / exam digital information not always available
- Visiting students may be required to find the right person to ask for permission or sign documents or give information



Victorious – Student experiences

- Students also use other communication programs (sometimes offered by the university)
 - MSN Messenger
 - Skype
 - AOL Instant Messenger



Victorious – Student experiences

- Students don't use e-mail address of host university
 - Login problems
 - Temporary access
 - Preference for personal e-mail address
 - Email not in English
 - Consequences for using VLE (linked to university email address)
- However, host universities often require it
 - e.g. access to e-learning / forums / mailing lists)
- Need for induction (eg. Forwarding)
 - *“I couldn't read my mail .. Because hotmail was among the websites you couldn't browse”*
 - *“when I found a useful document on the internet, I had to email it to myself then go to an internet café to print it”*



Victorious – Student experiences

Access to Web resources

- Students see browsing the web as an essential part of their lives abroad



- Sometimes complain about time / browsing restrictions
- Web used and needed to contact banks, buy tickets, fill in forms, download articles / learning materials etc.

Victorious – Student experiences

Some Conclusions

- ICT now an integral part of the Erasmus experience
- Institutions exhibit diverse practices in relation to ICT
- Home institution and campus sets the standard in their minds for comparison
- Conflicting levels of access, information and services (even at same University)
- Local and Erasmus students use same services, and find same ways of informally solving problems
- Opportunities - equally available to Erasmus students
- Websites and other information should offer alternative languages including English



Victorious – Student experiences

Some Conclusions

- Induction and early support are very important - not enough to treat Erasmus students the same as others
- Erasmus students' experience is *time-limited*, so achieving access should not be *time-consuming*
- Students appreciated integrated ICT provision where this was offered
- Conversely, some students found fragmented services frustrating (eg. Separate passwords)
- Access to the Web, email and general ICT services are felt to be essential for Erasmus students