BeyondScale

MTU
Ollscoil Teicneolaíochta na Mumhan
Munster Technological University

Guidelines on Peer-Learning

Munster Technological University

GUIDELINE ON PEER-LEARNING OUTBOUND ACTIVITY

Munster Technological University (MTU) - Hincks Centre for Entrepreneurship Excellence and the School of Business

BeyondScale - Developing the Organisational Capacity of Higher Education Institutions using the HEInnovate platform to facilitate peer-learning and a pan-European community of practice

Take-aways from peer-learning experiences

Peer-learning is a way for partners to learn from each other effectively. At a time when the university resources are limited and demands upon the staff are increasing, it can be beneficial internal as well as external stakeholders of an HEI to learn from each other.
For peer-learning to take place it is important to know who the "peers or buddies" are. For peer-learning to be achieved within the BeyondScale project a buddy system was created. The buddy system included internal HEI partners for the inbound projects, external for the outbound projects, and a system that involved project partners, associate partners as well as mentors. The internal partners were university management, heads of departments, heads of degree programs, experts in service units, and selected lecturers. On the other side external partners were public sector/policy-oriented organisations along with enterprise support organizations/incubators/start-ups, micro firms and relevant actors in the industry.

The internal HEI partners in the activities – the project team, administrative, academic, and other staff as well as students - benefited from the documentation of the activities of BeyondScale, the capacity building seminars and webinars organized at the higher education institutions. External stakeholders also benefited from the augmented capacity at the higher education institutions they collaborate with.

While COVID-19 made things more complicated, the design of the system allowed all partners to interact on multiple levels and with a variety of partners from the inside and the outside of their network. The result was the co-design and the implementation of inbound and outbound activities.

The following roadmap provides an overview of the peer-learning activities developed during the BeyondScale project. Further information is available at www.beyondscale.eu or you can contact us at: office@wpz-research.com

The roadmap on peer-learning included the following steps:

1. Think about what contribution you expect or what you want to learn
2. Think about your own contribution and whether your peer/buddy can use this contribution
3. Define together the goals of the exchange
4. Agree on the way of communication
5. Define future meetings or possibilities of exchange
6. Reflect on the value of the exchange
7. Think about further joint activities

An example of a peer-learning activity.

HEInnovate dimension: Knowledge Exchange & Collaboration

Description of the activity: The expansion of MTU's entrepreneurship ecosystem**.** While MTU's Entrepreneurship ecosystem has been well linked to various external stakeholders, their views are less understood. The value of external stakeholders is crucial for the continued success of MTU's strategy to support for entrepreneurship and innovation.

Partnership: Our participants represented

- Public sector
- Enterprise Support organisations
- Non-profit sector
- Small and medium-sized enterprise sector
- Start-up sector

Please explain the involvement, contributions, and future benefits of your partners:

External participants/ Partners	Involved in	Contribution	Future (mutual) benefit
• **Community Development Company Manager**	• Community development, training, European projects	• This organisation had not engaged with MTU before the outbound activity	• Benefit to MTU – potential partner on projects, source of training participants. • Benefits for the CDC – Partners on European projects and Innovation style research.
• **SME owner**	• A small business owner/operator in the services sector.	• Had some engagement with MTU, linked to Innovation Voucher research.	• Benefit to MTU – potential host for student work placement. • Benefit for SME – source of employees.

Why was peer-learning important for your activity?

- The exchange of knowledge and collaboration is key to learning. Sharing ideas and discussing common issues can create new opportunities for stakeholders.

What have you learnt during the peer-learning process of your outbound activity?

- The External participants at the workshop, whether existing or first-time partners, provide a new perspective on interacting with the University.
- MTU have many ways to support SMEs/organisations to develop their business activities.
- There is great interest and enthusiasm in collaborating with MTU.

Would you recommend the peer-learning buddy system to another HEI and why? What could other HEIs learn from it?

- Yes, as a way to exchange knowledge and collaborate beyond the University.
- Lesson: Target new internal colleagues (e.g, from different Faculties/Departments) to identify potential external partners (this will assist in widening the network).

What were the objectives of your activity?

- To map the nature and purpose of existing engagement with external stakeholders and HEI.
- To link with new external partners to explore ways to extend the entrepreneurship ecosystem.

What were the outcomes?

- An action plan of engagement for entrepreneurship and innovation at MTU.
- Plans to create a stakeholder group with the aim of expanding the MTU entrepreneurship ecosystem.

What were the possible opportunities?

- The identification of new stakeholders and the further dissemination of the HEInnovate tool.
- New host businesses for our Students' work placement.

What were the possible barriers and challenges?

- The Covid-19 restrictions.
- External stakeholders' limited time.