

## Guest lecture

The invitation of experts or guest lecturers is a collaboration format that can facilitate transdisciplinary learning and is usually simple to implement. In the setting of sustainability-driven entrepreneurship, guests could be from sustainability-driven enterprises, start-ups, or incubators. Guest lecturers provide an important educational experience for students based on their real-world life experiences. Students get to see the insight and perspective of the guest lecturers' specific field. The format can enable students to interact with professionals in formal and informal settings. Through discussions, interpersonal competence and communicative skills are fostered. Guests' contributions can take the format of a single lecture, a lecture series (e.g. along a specific period like one month or one semester) or workshops (with different time length according to the specific needs. E.g. a whole-day workshop allows more time for interaction and practical exercises than a rather short workshop of 1-2 hours).

Another benefit is the link that students get to make between what they learn in their textbooks and the experiences shared by the guest speaker. Students thereby build important connections between what they have learned and the real world.

### *Phase 1 – Planning*

Depending on the overall design of the course, the framework of integration including the selection criteria of guests is set. A choice of people based on personal contacts of the teacher works fast but can be limiting. A mix of proven and new lecturers is recommendable to bridge this gap.

### *Phase 2 – Preparation*

Careful preparation of the setting is required to use the full potential of this format despite its relative simplicity. An extensive briefing of guest lecturers about the course setting and aims is key to clarify expectations and set a fruitful frame for the corporation. A more profound approach would let the guest lecturers participate already in the design process of the course. Students should be informed about the personal background of the guest in order to prepare adequately for the unit. Ideally, students prepare for the guest lecture by doing some selected readings.

### *Phase 3 – Guest lecture unit*

To make optimal use of practitioners' knowledge and experience, guest lecturers can be asked to give feedback on student work during their visit. This should be communicated in advance and sufficient time must be reserved.

The exchange between the students and the external guests can be fostered through a dedicated space for a vital discussion. Relevant questions should be prepared by the students beforehand, especially when they are asked out of a critical point of view.



### *Phase 4 – Discussion & reflection*

After the visit of the guest lecturer, time for reflection helps to link back to the academic perspective of the course topic.

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*“I learned that having doubts and uncertainties is part of the everyday working reality and that you can learn to deal with that.” Student, Free University of Bozen-Bolzano, Italy*

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#### **Benefits**

- *Improve the ability to think critically*
- *Students linking own ideas directly to the input of practice actors*
- *Guest lecturers get in touch with young, motivated people*
- *Personal contact with teachers appreciated by guests*
- *Practical knowledge transfer to younger generation*

#### **Success factors**

- *Minimized bureaucracy according to formats' low complexity*
- *Interactive elements encouraging students to actively participate*
- *Availability of guest lecturer(s) for feedback, questions and discussion*
- *Flexibility of teacher concerning the needs of the guest(s)*

#### **Challenges**

- *Avoiding overlap in the guests' contribution to a topic*
- *Balanced division of time for input and discussion*
- *The guest lecturers' availability for students before and/or after the course unit*
- *Teacher should be prepared for intervening if necessary*



With the support of the  
Erasmus+ Programme  
of the European Union

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