

## Annex 5: British Council Definition of International experience

### *Ensuring every young person has international experience*

#### Definition

International experience refers to sustained and cumulative intercultural *encounters* with people of other countries and cultures, at home and through periods of time spent overseas.

This develops intercultural *competence* and *intelligence*: a combination of attitudes, knowledge, behaviours and skills that support mutually beneficial collaboration and understanding between people of different countries and cultures. Opportunities for young people to accumulate international experience, from early years through to vocational training or university and early professional life, establish stronger foundations for this lifelong learning process.

Intercultural encounters can involve *international mobility*: a period of time spent overseas that includes interaction and engagement with the local people and society, its language and culture, for example through study, voluntary work, employment or self-organised travel. It is also possible to have an intercultural encounter through *international experience at home*: collaborating with people of other countries and cultures living within the UK or through virtual connections with people overseas. Value from international experience is drawn through a process of reflection and analysis of the skills and perspectives learned.

Languages deserve special mention in the sphere of intercultural competence. The ability to speak other languages enables people to share their cultural perspectives, beliefs and values. “A high-quality languages education should foster pupils’ curiosity and deepen their understanding of the world”.<sup>1</sup>

International mobility and internationalism at home mutually support and enhance each other. It is likely that successful sustained engagement will include a mixture of both.

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<sup>1</sup> National Curriculum for England, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-curriculum-in-england-languages-programmes-of-study/national-curriculum-in-england-languages-programmes-of-study>

### Examples of *international experience at home*:

- Collaborative learning and dialogue through school partnerships, sustained through pen pal correspondence, digital learning spaces and online communication. Lessons learned are applied to learning in the curriculum, for example in different perspectives on world history, or the global impact of climate change.
- Employing someone of another country with a different first language as a Modern Language Assistant gives individuals direct access to authentic language and culture from another country, improving language ability and cultural awareness.
- Using technology to work collaboratively on a project with an overseas college, for example involving a case study from another country to understand cultural differences in the workplace.
- Engaging with people of other countries and cultures within the school, university or local community, for example through collaboration with international communities at University.
- Experiencing other cultures and languages through engagement with arts and culture from around the world, for example by studying a book in translation or exploring the music of another country. This experience is enhanced if it involves people from other countries, whether face to face or virtually. .

### Examples of *international mobility*:

- School or non-formal (through sports or cultural activities) exchange visits that enable young people to connect with local people, language and culture.
- A work placement or voluntary service overseas, involving working with local people and communities.
- A period of study overseas.

In all of these examples, it is important to incorporate the opportunity for the individual to reflect on what he or she has learned about the world and about themselves from this experience.

### An illustration of *regular and cumulative international experience*:

Our ambition is that international experience is woven into an individual's formal and non-formal education, regardless of their social or economic background. In this way, we believe that more young people will develop the skills and behaviours needed to flourish, making a positive contribution to the world both globally and locally. Whilst it is possible for an individual to have one life-changing experience that can transform their outlook and prospects, we believe that regular and cumulative interaction will help to broaden the horizons of young people, and increase awareness of the opportunities that are available through connections with people of other countries and cultures.

Below is an illustration of one individual's potential for regular international experience. The life skills and knowledge developed as a result are equally cumulative and there is no finite attainment. They include awareness of culture and context of others' world views, adaptability, self-awareness and resilience.

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| Age 5-11  | <p>Encounters with people of other countries and cultures through school partnerships. Collaborative learning programmes integrated into the curriculum.</p> <p>Engagement with other cultures through arts or sporting activity, encouraging dialogue and exchange of values.</p> <p>Short exchange visits to other countries, involving working and socialising with people of another country.</p> <p>Introduction of language learning, supported through connections to authentic language and culture with native speakers and contemporary culture.</p> <p>Teacher, school leadership and youth worker development supports global perspectives in school and non-formal sector.</p> |
| Age 11-16 | <p>Continuation and strengthening of above activities and programmes.</p> <p>Possibility of longer exchange visits overseas.</p>  |
| Age 16-26 | <p>Vocational training includes intercultural and international awareness and experience, strengthened through encounters with people of other countries and cultures.</p> <p>Collaborate with an overseas college through technology, for example involving a case study from another country to understand cultural differences in the workplace.</p> <p>Period of study or work experience overseas, potential for long-term overseas experience through a year of study abroad or work experience.</p> <p>Collaborative working with people of other countries and cultures within the UK, for example through activities developed with international communities at University.</p>   |