



VIRTUAL PROGRAMS

Consortium for North American Higher Education Collaboration
Consorcio para la Colaboración de la Educación Superior en América del Norte
Consortium pour la collaboration dans l'enseignement supérieur en Amérique du Nord

CONAHEC VIRTUAL INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMS

Student Virtual Exchange

About

What is a CONAHEC virtual exchange?

- A program that allows a student from a CONAHEC member institution to enroll in one or more for-credit courses offered completely online by another CONAHEC member institution located in a different country.
- A virtual exchange program transforms a local virtual classroom into a global classroom where students from different institutions can participate and earn academic credits toward their degree.

What is NOT a virtual exchange?

- This program does not replace traditional in-person mobility program. It is a complement.
- Virtual learning is not the same as remote learning. Therefore, not every course that an institution offers to be taught remotely is adequate to host international students in a virtual exchange program.
 - The current pandemic pushed all institutions who were teaching face-to-face courses to rapidly switch their classes to a remote format. This was an emergency and should not be the norm for distance learning. Courses need to be designed with a pedagogy suited for engaging in distance education.

Objectives

- Expose students to faculty, curriculum, and peers from different countries.
- Allow students to earn credits from a foreign institution.
- Help students perfect a second language by taking classes in said language.
- To transform an already virtual classroom into a global classroom.

Why should students participate

- Alternative to traditional mobility programs that require students to travel and live abroad.
- Earn credits from a foreign institution while you are still enrolled and taking classes from your home university.
- Take classes in a different language is an excellent way to expand your writing, listening, and speaking skills.
- Establish relationships and a network with students and faculty from a different institution in a foreign country.
- A low-risk opportunity to 'get your feet wet' with an international education. After this experience, students can opt to participate in an education abroad program.



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Requirements

Institutional Requirements (host institution)

- Offer at least one course that will be taught fully online.
- Offer at least 3 spaces for international students in any online course.
 - The host institution would have to register those students as visiting students in the class, waive any tuition fees (universities are allowed to charge an administrative fee which ideally shouldn't be of more than \$50 USD or equivalent per course).
- Share with CONAHEC the course offering including: Course name, description, general content and/or expected learning outcomes, language of instruction, pre-requisites, required materials (textbooks, software, etc.), students' requirements (major, GPA, language proficiency, etc.), course format (synchronous/asynchronous, platform, schedule), number of available spaces.
- Admit and enroll interested students.
- Provide the students access to any resources they will need for their successful participation in the course. This includes but is not limited to: Login credentials to the learning management system (LMS) used by the institution, access to an e-mail address from the host institution, access to digital resources at the institution's library, access to technical support for the LMS or any other virtual resources.
- Provide an orientation to students which includes how to use the platform and how to access any forms of support.
- Support the students throughout the semester with any academic or technical issues they might face.
- At the end of the term, the host institution is responsible of issuing a transcript/official letter stating whether the student passed or failed the course and any specific grade they obtained (if applicable).

Institutional Requirements (home institution)

- Promote the course offering among their students.
- Advise students on the courses and specific process to enroll at the host institution.
- Monitor the students' progress during the semester.
- Use the host institution's transcript to transfer the earned credits into the student's official academic record.

Student Requirements

- Students must be enrolled and seeking a degree from a CONAHEC member higher education institution.
- Be able/willing to participate in the classes in the format that the host institution is offering them. This includes considering if the classes will be synchronous, asynchronous, or a mix of both; familiarity with the pedagogies of online learning and the use of technology.



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How it works:

1. HEIs share with CONAHEC the courses in which they are able to host international students as well as the overall number of students that they would be able to host under this scheme.
 - a. We suggest that universities do not simply share their whole online catalogue, but rather a selection of courses that—given their design, pedagogy, and instructor's experience—are suited to host international students.
 - b. Institutions can also start by offering a few courses that bundled together can become a certificate or specialization. For example, three courses on different topics that together can help students to become familiar with the economic, social, and cultural aspects of the host institution's region. Or a group of courses in a specific discipline.
2. CONAHEC will share with all its members the information of each institution's offer. The information should include at least: available courses with description, language of instruction, available spaces, requirements, dates, medium of instruction, admission/enrollment process, any extra/special fees.
3. Each institution promotes the offer with its students and provides advising for those interested in enrolling in one or more courses abroad.
 - a. Please note that students can certainly choose to take classes from different institutions during the same term, but we don't recommend it; however, each home institution can decide their specific rules and requirements.
4. Once a student decides to participate, the home institution will contact the host institution to formally nominate and share any documentation on behalf of the student.
 - a. For the time being, CONAHEC will not process the applications for a virtual exchange. This first year will be a pilot while we adapt our system to accept nominations for either physical or virtual exchanges.
5. The host institution will then admit and enroll the student following its own process and regulations.
 - a. Please note that the student can still be enrolled at its home institution during this term.
6. At the end of the term, the students will receive a transcript with their grades which the home institution will use to transfer the credits earned by the student.

Important Considerations

- Virtual learning is not the same as remote learning. The current pandemic pushed all institutions who were teaching face-to-face courses to rapidly switch their classes to a remote format. This was an emergency and therefore, universities should not offer international students (through this program) the possibility to enroll in courses that were not designed to be taught online.
- CONAHEC does not currently offers an online system to manage applications for a virtual exchange. We facilitate the sharing of information, but it is ultimately the home and host institution who will have to submit/process all the necessary documentation on behalf of the students.
- Being a virtual program, it is possible than neither the home nor the host institution are communicating regularly with the students; therefore, we encourage institutions to actively follow-up with students to make sure they are engaged and actively participating in the classes.