

Online Socializing Activities for Support and Promote Virtual Student Mobility with Partner Institutions

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Abstract

Virtual student mobility is now widely applied as a sustainable study abroad under pandemic for a few semesters. Many online platforms have been developed to support virtual mobility. Before pandemic, online platforms were mainly employed to offer lecture contents in course work as e-learning. Through the experiences of pandemic situation where all contents in course work, even whole degree programs have to be done without face-to-face mode, other contents such as course assessment, seminar, entrance examination, course orientation thesis defense have been managed in online mode using new platforms. Most of HEIs are now capable in conducting most of educational activities online.

One important function of university campus is to provide valuable experience through student interaction/socialization via extracurricular activities. Since all students stay home/dorm under pandemic situation, doing socializing activity face-to-face is quite difficult. Many universities tend to put more effort to conduct online educational activities under curriculum resulting in online extracurricular activities particularly student socializations were managed with commitment by student group or association. However, socializing activities between exchange students in virtual mobility and students in host university remains difficult. University of Tsukuba has been conducting series of online socializing activities specifically with students in partner universities abroad including virtual exchange students. Through 2-year experience in online socializing activities, it was found that commitment of university is quite important not only for interaction with virtual exchange student, but also promoting study abroad as well as strengthening institutional linkages for future academic collaboration.