



EPOKA UNIVERSITY

Annual Academic Staff Professional Development Training

Date:
October 16, 2020

Purpose

Epoka University offers an annual academic staff professional development training at the beginning of the new academic year. This year, in light of the online teaching needs of Covid-19 and potential ongoing online teaching needs, the professional development training focuses on supporting staff in online instruction and collaboration. This online event objective is to offer hands-on training on Virtual Mobility, distance teaching & VCL. During this session participants will learn how to develop Virtual Collaborative Learning activities within their courses, offering a meaningful learning experience to their students and how to make online classes engaging for students.

Format

The training will be a half-day activity. The training will be held online and is mandatory for full-time academic staff.

Main Organizers

**Epoka University's:
Permanent Commission on Quality Assurance (PCQA) in
cooperation with the Research and Projects Office (RPO),
Internal Quality Assurance Office (IQAO), Information and
Communications Technology Office (ICTCO) and the
Continuous Education Center.**

Summary of Workshop

Epoka University staff participated in an online academic workshop with trainers from the VALEU-X Erasmus+ project partners at Technical University of Dresden and Dr. Arben Asllani, a Fulbright Scholar at Epoka University in the spring of 2019-2020 and Professor of Data Analytics at the University of Tennessee Chattanooga.

The first training session, hosted by VALEU-X, or Virtual Albanian European Universities eXchange, featured three speakers. Aleksander Clauss presented design dimensions of quality assurance in virtual mobility and virtual exchange. Four key elements he shared were the need for professionalized pedagogical support, realistic cases and working tasks, the technical platform, and learning analytics and information visualization.

Esmir Demaj shared the findings of a survey of student feedback on online instruction for the spring semester of the 2019-2020 academic year at Epoka University. Findings showed that Covid-19 created a number of challenges for students, including psychological challenges. Students preferred in-class teaching to online teaching.

Mattis Altmann of the Technical University of Dresden examined the didactic, technical, and social dimensions of online learning and shared a toolbox of applications that can help with online instruction and engagement. Apps shared included Tricider, Slido, Kahoot, Kialo, and MS Forms, and the use of each was demonstrated in the interactive workshop.

The second session of the online academic workshop featured insights from Dr. Arben Asllani on making the transition to online teaching, including a focus on student engagement, virtual labs, and Hyflex. Dr. Asllani shared the Hyflex approach of varying levels and options of online and in-class instruction and participation. He also used Mentimeter and question features on Google Slides to demonstrate tools for soliciting feedback from participants and walked participants through the use of Canvas as an online learning platform. His instruction also provided participants with checklists for preparing and delivering online classes.

This online academic workshop was designed to help Epoka staff further improve their online teaching after the initial transition of classes online during the Covid-19 pandemic in the spring semester. This workshop was organized by the Permanent Commission on Quality Assurance (PCQA) in cooperation with the Research and Projects Office (RPO), the Internal Quality Assurance Office (IQAO), the Information and Communications Technology Office (ICTCO) and the Continuous Education Center. The training is part of the annual cycle of professional development trainings offered for Epoka University staff.

Agenda

Date: **October 16, 2020**

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| <u>Afternoon Session (First Part)- On “How to develop Virtual Collaborative Learning in your classroom”</u> Virtual Albanian European Universities Exchange (VALEU-X) Erasmus+ project | |
| 13:00 | Introduction: virtual vs. analogue teaching Mattis Altmann, Alexander Clauss, Technische Universität Dresden, Germany |
| 13:15 | Spring Semester 2020 “experience & challenges” Esmir Demaj, EPOKA University, Albania |
| 13:30 | Hands-on Virtual Collaborative Learning Mattis Altmann, Alexander Clauss, Anna Leichsenring, Technische Universität Dresden, Germany |
| 14:15 | Evaluation & quick wins |
| 15:00 | Final remarks and information for further events |
| 15:00 - 15:10 | Break |
| <u>Afternoon Session (Second Part)- On “Online Teaching”</u> | |
| 15:10-16:10 | Making the transition to online teaching: student engagement, virtual labs, hyflex Dr. Arben Asllani |

Profiles of Trainers



VALEU-X supports the internationalization of Albanian universities by introducing Virtual Blended Mobility as an internationalisation at home instrument. VALEU-X is co-funded by the Erasmus+ programme of the European Union.

From January 2020 six Albanian universities are working, in collaboration with European partners and with the support of the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union, in a project called VALEU-X, Virtual Albanian European Universities Exchange. The project is adding a significant value to the teaching process in Albania by empowering academic staff with contemporary, digital teaching competencies to implement Virtual Collaborative Learning (VCL) as an everyday teaching practice, offering a chance to explore, implement, and disseminate Virtual Mobility and Internationalisation at Home practices.

Dr. Arben Asllani

He is a professor of data analytics and the Marvin E. White Professor of Management in the UTC Gary W. Rollins College of Business. He is the author of "Business Analytics with Management Science Models and Methods" (Pearson/F.T. Press). He is now working on his second book, "Big Data Technologies for Business," which will be published by Prospect Press in 2021. He has published more than 75 papers in peer-reviewed journals and proceedings, including top-ranked journals, such as "Omega," "Transfusion," "European Journal of Operational Research," and "Knowledge Management." Asllani is a certified online instructor, implementing new teaching styles and techniques that reflect the latest trends in higher education. He has developed new academic programs and has assisted international institutions in the area of data analytics. As a post-doctoral Fellow of Cybersecurity, he serves as consultant and trainer to a variety of business and government agencies in the USA.