Connecting Minds and Creating the Future:
towards a THE-ICE Network of Virtual Lecturer Exchange (VLE)

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Introduction: Enhancing the Global Classroom

Given the international nature of the hospitality, tourism, and events industries one issue has been how to create a global classroom that gives students diverse and international perspectives that go beyond the knowledge of any single lecturer. While this can be done by drawing on staff and students' expertise and using international materials, real-time engagement with lecturers and industry experts from other parts of the world is often missing. During the pandemic, many institutions were forced to stop face-to-face teaching, and many traditional, presential guest lectures were halted. However, other institutions seized the opportunity and found ways to make their classrooms more global. Breda University of Applied Sciences received student feedback that they would welcome more international guest lecturers – either academic or from industry. Furthermore, students stated they would like to be exposed to more diverse and international perspectives. This raises the question as to how to achieve this, using the power of the THE-ICE collective. Therefore, the general objective of this study is to investigate how we could develop and maintain a network of lecturers from across all THE-ICE accredited institutions who could collaboratively teach online between different institutions, i.e., acting as international guest lecturers in the study programmes of THE-ICE accredited institutions. We aim to get insight in opportunities, pros and cons, do's and don'ts in relation to virtual lecturer exchange across the THE-ICE institutions. Furthermore, we assess the opportunity to create a series of virtual exchange subjects that could be shared between the THE-ICE member institutions.

Literature

The drive for internationalisation of higher education is one of the most significant forces affecting universities in the Western world today; increased international academic cooperation and mobility is stimulated. ICT and e-learning strategies are a key element in today's higher education (reinforced by COVID-19 in the past years), changing teaching and learning possibilities in various ways[1]. Virtual lecturer exchange makes it possible to increase the level of internationalisation and intercultural exchange in study programmes[2]. This makes it possible to offer students high-quality international and cross-cultural education without physical mobility of lecturers[3]. While virtual lectures may not fully replace the benefits of physical mobility, participants in virtual exchanges ought to reap some of the benefits of international educational experiences. Digital platforms represent a valuable tool in this matter[4].

The ideas and practices behind the concept of VE (virtual exchange of *students*) and VLE (virtual *lecturer* exchange) have been around for many years. As the EU-funded EVOLVE project into Virtual Exchange[5] pointed out, the following terms are sometimes considered as synonyms to V(L)E and can partly overlap with it:

- Telecollaboration in the field of language learning;
- Globally networked learning;
- Collaborative online international learning (COIL);
- Online Intercultural Exchange.

[1] Saraf, C., Sirdesai, N., & Gade, S. (2022). Paradigm shift in teaching-learning from classroom to virtual mode – Challenges and opportunities. Journal of Education Technology in Health Sciences, 8(3), 117-121.

[2] Commander, N. E., Schloer, W. F., & Cushing, S. T. (2022). Virtual exchange: a promising high-impact practice for developing intercultural effectiveness across disciplines. Journal of Virtual Exchange, 5, 1-19. https://doi.org/10.21827/jve.5.37329

[3] Mittelmeier, J., Rienties, B., Gunter, A., & Raghuram, P. (2021). Conceptualizing internationalization at a distance: A "third category" of university internationalization. Journal of Studies in International Education, 25(3), 266-282.

[4] Holubiyi, D., & Radi, M. (2020). Higher Education in the time of COVID-19: Challenges and Opportunities of online learning. In Conference Report: Professors without Borders.

[5] EVOLVE project: Evidence-Validated Online Learning through Virtual Exchange; see https://evolve-erasmus.eu/

Only in the past few years have these ideas been widely adopted as a way of encouraging and enabling students to have an "internationalisation-at-home" experience. In particular, the appeal of V(L)E is that it can use technology and help to develop and build cross-cultural competences. Furthermore, as the world of work is changing, having skills that allow students to work online with networked teams in other countries is going to become increasingly important. This is not something that was being done in traditional face-to-face classes.

Some advantages and challenges of V(L)E

Advantages

- International – allows staff to engage in global educational activities with peers from other universities and countries
- Inter-cultural – offers staff the opportunity to engage with staff from very different backgrounds in a more 'neutral' environment
- Online and flexible – allows staff to work online, and is more flexible than traditional mobility options
- Wider academic access – to a wider pool of academic staff and their ideas and concepts
- Diverse learning experience - multiple formats, differing content and flexible choices
- Global connectivity – allows staff to become part of a wider global community that allows staff to make connections and to develop an international network

Challenges

- Technology - staff having limited access to technology; lack of support
- Competences – potential limited digital competences of teaching staff
- Time-zones - hindering synchronous communication
- Calendar - differing semester/term dates
- Institutional resistance - to the inter-institutional approach to learning which VLE can involve
- Who leads? – global mobility office, teaching and learning, or individual staff?
- Is staff prepared - for working cross culturally and online?
- Dedicated courses or embedded – is it an activity that can be put into an existing course?

Methodology

In the frame of this study, secondary data was collected (online) from academic and professional literature. Additionally, primary data was collected by means of [1] a survey at THE-ICE accredited institutions (see Appendix 1) and [2] online semi-structured interviews with a range of staff from THE-ICE accredited institutions as well as THE-ICE operational management. Respondents were probed with open questions following a pre-developed item-list (see Appendix 2). As a follow-up of the interviews, data analysis was performed.

Findings

I. Survey

The survey had 7 respondents from the following countries: The Philippines, Thailand, Fiji, Australia and the Netherlands. All institutions offer undergraduate programmes, 4 offer Master programmes and 1 institution offers vocational programmes.

- 5 respondents indicated they have experience with receiving virtual guest lecturers to their institution;
- 3 respondents indicated they have experience with sending virtual guest lecturers to other institutions;
- 2 respondents have experience with joint course design and delivery through virtual collaboration;

- **None** of the respondents have received nor sent academic staff from/to other THE-ICE accredited institutions as virtual guest lecturers or collaborated in course design and delivery.

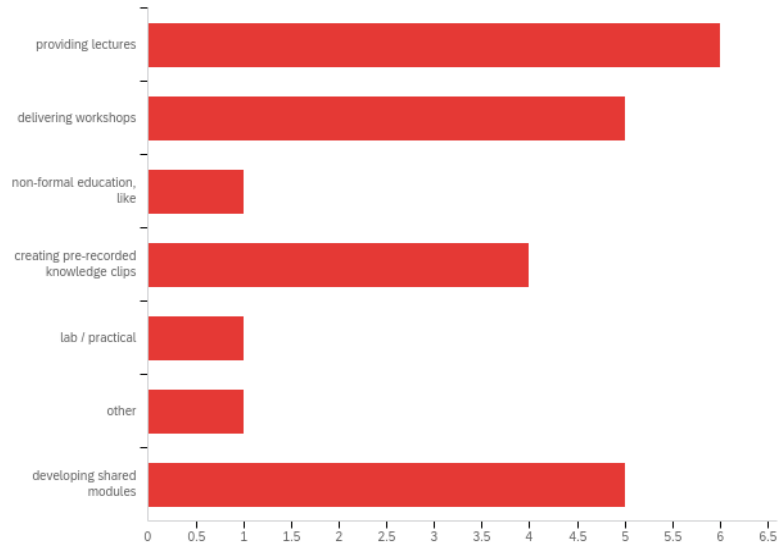The types of virtual educational activities that would work best in the respondents' opinion are:

Figure 1. Frequency of best virtual educational activities mentioned by respondents; n=7

The areas of expertise that the institutions like to <u>receive</u> by virtual guest lecturers from other THE-ICE institutions are:
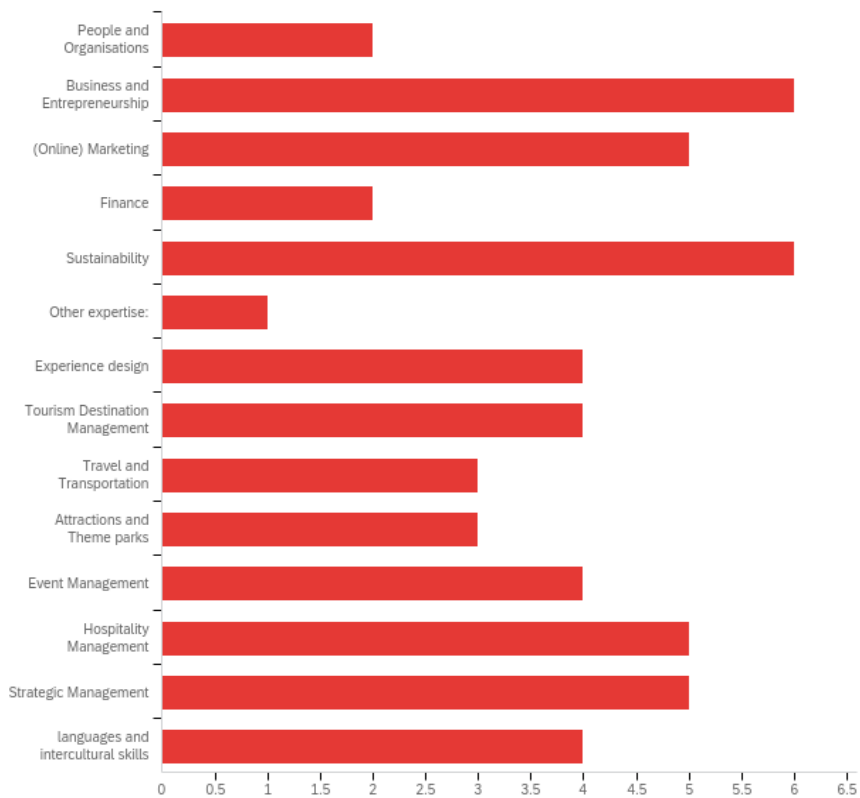

Figure 2. Areas of expertise institutions like to receive by virtual guest lecturers; number of times mentioned, n=7

The areas of expertise that respondents are looking for in course design and delivery through virtual collaboration are:
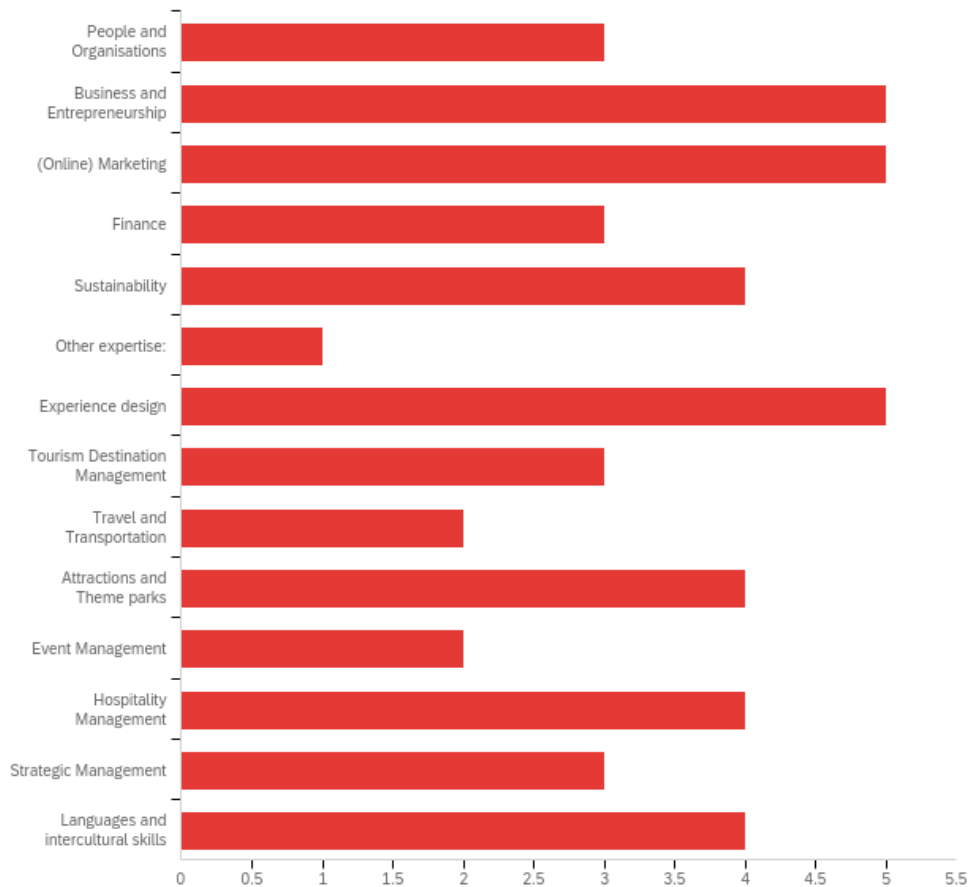

Figure 3. Areas of expertise institutions are looking for by course design and delivery; number of times mentioned; n=7

II. Follow-up interviews

5 interviews with THE-ICE accredited institutions were conducted, and 1 interview with a representative of THE-ICE staff. Topics discussed in the interviews and the related main outcomes:

1. **What needs could a THE-ICE network for VLE fulfil for your institution?**

Such network would allow our institution to…
- expose students to international content & lecturers so that they gain insights into different perspectives and increase their intercultural skills (3);
- invite international <u>academic staff</u> as guest lecturers besides guest lectures from industry speakers (3);
- increase the tangible value of our THE-ICE membership and bring it down to a more tactical level to lecturers and, over time, down to the student level.

> *"It would be lovely to have someone from other countries or from different walks of life. […] I think that brings lots of real-life experience to our students. […] It just broadens their horizons. […] it would be empowering and open lots of possibilities […] and help them with their critical thinking. And I think that would be very interesting."*

2. **What should such network look like for your institution to benefit from it?**

 The network should…
- offer easy access to lecturers who can be invited to give their perspective on a particular topic as an add-on to the home institution's course (3);
- consist of international professors who could handle major courses, commit long-term and possibly be involved in assessment (2);
- give students opportunities to see other students' presentations/work and give and receive feedback;
- require as few rules and formalities as possible.

3. **What would be the first steps in setting up such network?**
- Create a list, database or communication platform on which lecturers, topics, courses and activities - including learning outcomes- and the institution's expertise can be easily found (3)
- Receive approval and time allowance from decision-makers such as deans and programme directors to participate in this network (2), especially in the case of joint course design and delivery
- Identify in which fields there is a need for guest lecturers and which expertise can be offered to the network, so that institutions can "mix and match".

One respondent interested in longer-term virtual lecturer exchange expressed the wish to check the qualifications of the lecturers participating in the network, unless it is decided to trust the quality label issued by THE-ICE and forgo on the screening process.

4. **Feasibility**
All respondents state that the proposal is feasible, logical and beneficial.

5. **Active engagement**
All respondents said to be able and willing to participate actively in the development of this network by providing lecturers and finding support internally from decision-makers.

6. **Challenges**
- Teaching across different time zones, planning and schedules
- Time allocation on an institutional level
- Commitment
- Reciprocity

> *"I think that it is something very feasible. To be honest, I don't see many challenges. I think that it can work very well. And that it's just a matter of sitting down and say, OK, this is what I do here. What do you do there? What can we do together? And then let's have it."*

7. **THE-ICE duties**

All respondents believe THE-ICE should act as a facilitator and carry out administrative tasks, more specifically:
- Fulfil the role of instigator, communicator and promoter to invite and encourage member institutions to participate in this network
- Create a platform on which members can find lecturers and topics and an overview of conditions and restrictions.

Moreover, two respondents stated that THE-ICE should be aware that this network would be beneficial for THE-ICE itself, as it would give the organization an opportunity to "know what's going on" among academics, create value for their members and feed into their pool of webinar and conference speakers.

THE-ICE confirms that it "would definitely support and encourage anything that enhances connections between the network and adds value back to the network." (C. Thompson, personal communication, September 29, 2022).

Reciprocity

All respondents agree there must be balance in giving to and receiving from the network for parties to remain committed.

Suggestions to stimulate reciprocity include:

- Stipulate terms and conditions for institutions to join the network and agree on a given number of lecturers or topics per term or academic year to be offered to the network;
- Make the "time units or teaching load" given to the network explicit;
- Allow prospective members to try one or two lectures before fully committing to the network, as this would reduce potential resistance or insecurity to join.

Two respondents believe that reciprocity should not be seen as a strict "give one – receive one" construct, but should be based on flexible collaboration, meaning that institutions may give more and receive less one term/year and vice versa the next term/year.

A communication platform

All respondents agree a communication platform, speakers list or database should be created, managed, maintained and supported by THE-ICE.

Practical recommendations include:

- Start with a small group of institutions
- Offer an easy-to-use search tool on subject, field of expertise, institution, names, who is available and when
- Use tags or symbols for ease of access to information, for example, a green leaf for topics related to sustainability
- Add informative trailer/teaser videos in which the lecturer introduces the topic
- Provide course outlines and learning outcomes
- Give an indication of the level of difficulty

> *"The power is in the members, and they need to create value for themselves through interaction. […] It's an ongoing network that you really want to be a member of because there's value and there's good relations or people that you are interested in that you can meet."*

In addition to the suggestions made by institutions, THE-ICE also pointed out that showcasing tangible outcomes such as recordings or student feedback to (prospective) participants could encourage ongoing commitment.

Financial matters

Apart from possible internal time allocation to participating lecturers, respondents are reluctant or unable to allocate additional budget to participation in the network and want to avoid complex international payment constructions and tax implications.

Long-term benefits

This network for virtual lecturer exchange could serve as a springboard for institutions to get to know each other better, which could lead to other forms of sustainable collaboration such as research, longer-term virtual or physical staff exchange, joint course creation & delivery, MoUs, partnerships and other initiatives.

> *"This is a beautiful initiative […] and it's very, very welcome to all of us, especially now after COVID-19 when we need to regroup, reshake and reshape."*

APPENDIX 1.

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Welcome to the survey: ***"Towards a THE-ICE network for Virtual Lecturer Exchange"***

Introduction

Thanks to the developments in information and communication technology, learning can take place anytime and anywhere. It also creates opportunities for enhancing teaching and learning in Tourism, Hospitality & Events.

In this study, THE-ICE (supported by Breda University, The Netherlands) we want to address 2 topics:

1. to investigate how a network from across all THE-ICE accredited institutes could be developed, consisting of lecturers that are willing and able to teach online on other THE-ICE institutes. In this survey, these lecturers are referred to as ***virtual international guest lecturers***.
2. to investigate if THE-ICE member institutes are interested in joint course design and course delivery through virtual collaboration.

The research findings will be presented at THE-ICE IPoE Forum **7th – 9th November 2022**

This survey only takes a few minutes of your time, we highly appreciate your contribution!

Best regards from The Netherlands,
Lucette Roovers, Corne Dijkmans, Suzanne Vollenbronck

Q1 - part 1.
Do you already have experience with inviting virtual international guest lecturers to your programs?

○ Yes, with THE-ICE-member institute(s), namely

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○ Yes, with another international institute

○ No

Q2 - part 1.
Does your institute already have experience with your own academic staff acting as virtual international guest lecturers at other institutes?

○ Yes, with THE-ICE-member institute(s), namely

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○ Yes, with another international institute

○ No

Q3 - part 1.
At which program level or levels would you like to host virtual international guest lecturers?
Multiple answers are possible.

☐ Vocational

☐ Undergraduate (Bachelor)

☐ Graduate (Master)

Q4 - part 1.
At which program level or levels would your academic staff be able to act as virtual international guest lecturer?
Multiple answers are possible.

☐ Vocational

☐ Undergraduate (Bachelor)

☐ Graduate (Master)

Q5 - part 1.
What types of virtual educational activities would work best in your opinion?
Multiple answers are possible.

☐ providing lectures

☐ creating pre-recorded knowledge clips

☐ delivering workshops

☐ lab / practical

☐ developing shared modules

☐ [   ] non-formal education, like

☐ [   ] other

Q6 - part 1.
In which areas of expertise would your institute be able to OFFER virtual international guest lecturers to other THE-ICE institutes?

Please select all that apply.

- [ ] People and Organisations
- [ ] Business and Entrepreneurship
- [ ] (Online) Marketing
- [ ] Finance
- [ ] Sustainability
- [ ] Experience design
- [ ] Tourism Destination Management
- [ ] Travel and Transportation
- [ ] Attractions and Theme parks
- [ ] Event Management
- [ ] Hospitality Management
- [ ] Strategic Management
- [ ] Languages and intercultural skills
- [ ] Other expertise:

Q7 - part 1.
In which areas of expertise would your institute like to RECEIVE virtual international guest lecturers from other THE-ICE institutes?

Please select all that apply.

- ☐ People and Organisations
- ☐ Business and Entrepreneurship
- ☐ (Online) Marketing
- ☐ Finance
- ☐ Sustainability
- ☐ Experience design
- ☐ Tourism Destination Management
- ☐ Travel and Transportation
- ☐ Attractions and Theme parks
- ☐ Event Management
- ☐ Hospitality Management
- ☐ Strategic Management
- ☐ languages and intercultural skills
- ☐ Other expertise:

Q8 - part 1.

What are the challenges that need to be addressed to make THE-ICE's network of virtual internation guest lecturers work?

Q9 - part 1.

What needs to be planned and managed from an organisational perspective to make THE-ICE's network of virtual international guest lecturers effective?

[ ]

Q10 - part 1.
By virtually exchanging academic staff as international guest lecturers, THE-ICE accredited institutes could enhance the international character of their study programs.
Would your institute be interested to join the new THE-ICE network of institutions that are willing to implement or strengthen the use of virtual international guest lecturers?

○ Yes
○ No
○ Maybe

Block 3

Q11 - part 2.
Improvement of the international character of the study programs of THE-ICE accredited institutes could also be achieved by collaboration in development and delivery of courses.

Would you be interested in joint course design and course delivery through virtual collaboration?

○ Yes
○ No
○ Maybe

Q12 - part 2.

Do you already have experience with joint course design and course delivery through virtual collaboration?

○ Yes, with THE-ICE-member institute(s), namely

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○ Yes, with another international institute

○ No

Q13 - part 2.

What area or areas of expertise would you like to offer to other THE-ICE member institutes in development and delivery of courses through virtual collaboration?

Please select all that apply.

☐ People and Organisations

☐ Business and Entrepreneurship

☐ (Online) Marketing

☐ Finance

☐ Sustainability

☐ Experience design

☐ Tourism Destination Management

☐ Travel and Transportation

☐ Attractions and Theme parks

☐ Event Management

☐ Hospitality Management

☐ Strategic Management

☐ Languages and intercultural skills

☐ Other expertise:

[text box]

Q14 - part 2.
What area or areas of expertise would you like other THE-ICE member institutes to offer to you in course design and delivery through virtual collaboration?

Please select all that apply.

☐ People and Organisations
☐ Business and Entrepreneurship
☐ (Online) Marketing
☐ Finance
☐ Sustainability
☐ Experience design
☐ Tourism Destination Management
☐ Travel and Transportation
☐ Attractions and Theme parks
☐ Event Management
☐ Hospitality Management
☐ Strategic Management
☐ Languages and intercultural skills

☐ Other expertise:

[text area]

part 3

Q15 .
This survey is anonymous. However for collecting some more detailed information in a later stage of this research, we may need to have contact details of the participants in this survey. If you are willing to share your details, please enter them below. Of course all information will be treated confidentially.

First name

[text box]

Last name

[text box]

Email address

[text box]

Phone number

[text box]

Name of University

[text box]

My position

[text box]

Q16 .

Given the objective of this study various staff members from THE-ICE accredited institutes will be invited to participate in interviews after this survey e.g. experts on digital learning, international officers, Deans and lecturers.

What member of staff or faculty can be invited to take part in this 30-minute online interview in September?

First name

Last name

Email address

Phone number

Name of University

Position

Working days

APPENDIX 2

Introduction:

Starting point/problem: BUas students indicated they would like to have more international guest lecturers.

This study aims to investigate how we could develop and maintain a network of lecturers from across all THE-ICE accredited institutes who could collaboratively teach online between different institutes, i.e., acting as virtual international guest lecturers or for joint course design and course delivery through virtual collaboration between THE-ICE institutes.

The anticipated outcomes of the study are:

- Creating insights in the opportunities, pros and cons, do's and don'ts in relation to virtual lecturer exchange.

- Creating a 'Speaker Bureau' list for lecturers in tourism, hospitality and events who are willing to share their knowledge and expertise with other THE-ICE institutes on the basis of online contributions.

- Increasing the number of guest lectures within and between THE-ICE accredited institutes, building on virtual exchange that will give students international learning opportunities, without the cost and burden of physical mobility.

- Potential for joint course design and course delivery through virtual collaboration for students, which would enhance the quality standards of THE-ICE.

Interview questions:

1. What needs could such network satisfy for your HEI?
2. What conditions should be / what should such network look like for your institution to benefit from it?
3. What do you think are the first steps if THE-ICE accredited institutions were to set up a network of virtual international lecturers?
4. To what extent do you think it's feasible to develop and maintain a network of lecturers across THE-ICE accredited institutes?
5. What challenges do you see?
6. To what extent would your institution be willing to take up an active role in the development of such network?
7. What roles and duties do you see for THE-ICE organisation to facilitate members of such network?
8. Can you think of any practical, logistical or strategic do's and don'ts we should consider?
9. Do you have any additional questions or comments?