

Inter-American Network for Language Education (RIFL)
Inter-American Organization for Higher Education (IOHE)

Working Paper

General Objective:

To contribute to internationalization by stimulating language mobility among students, professors and university leaders in order to provide for academic university education which fosters intercultural dialogue and promotes a better understanding of the diversity of cultural heritage in the Americas.

Specific Objectives:

1) Foster language learning within an inter-American space by:

- offering distance language training
- organising academic continuing education programs in language pedagogy
- developing instruments to measure language fluency and competence

2) Encourage mobility and internationalization by:

- facilitating access to inter-institutional education programs in another language
- organizing intensive language internships languages for students, teachers and university leaders
- encouraging annual or semester exchanges for language teachers

3) Facilitate the exchange of pedagogical models by:

- encouraging the sharing of pedagogical resources
- developing joint curriculums for language learning
- identifying best practices for language teaching

4) Promote research in both language teaching and language planning by:

- facilitating the circulation of existing research
- encouraging collaboration between researchers on new topics
- organizing inter-American conferences for both scholars and practitioners

Areas of Activity:

Language Learning:

The network will emphasize language learning for students, professors and senior administrators and university leaders that are members of the IOHE. Training will cover all institutions and therefore the RIFL will promote the four languages: French, English, Spanish and Portuguese. Several models and approaches will be used: online education; student exchanges within academic programs; intensive programs for students, either at their home institution or in the country of the target language; custom language programs for professors, administrators and university leaders in parallel to other activities by the Institute for Management and University Leadership (IGLU), thematic seminars and workshops, or even Inter-America Seminars (SIA).

Training and Certification of Language Teachers:

The RIFL will work with teachers and teacher training institutions to offer language learning programs with or without certification. Custom workshops for language improvement will be integrated in these training programs. Many models may be used: workshops at the home institution or in the country of the target language; exchange of teachers between institutions; distance education for groups or individuals; travelling teams of trainers.

Instruments to Test and Assess Language Skills:

The Network will encourage institutions to share instruments for testing and assessment; the standardisation of existing instruments, and if necessary the development of new instruments to assess language skills for all the target groups. The RIFL will ensure that these tools are made available online.

Pedagogical Material for Language Learning:

Many member institutions already have extensive collections of resource and pedagogical materials that are used for teaching and language learning. In order to make material available to all participants, the RIFL will inventory existing collections and see what can be made available to all institutions, will encourage scanning of certain works, will create teams to develop new material, and will develop an exchange mechanism between institutions, for instance by using a web platform.

Research:

The RIFL will facilitate collaboration between scholars in the field of language teaching and learning and in language planning, will foster the dissemination of existing research and encourage other scholars to develop an interest in linguistic subjects. The RIFL will explore the possibility of setting up a virtual consortium of researchers for exchanges on current research and will decide upon a program of research to foster according to identified needs. The RIFL will also encourage the holding of research symposiums in the context of the IOHE's annual meetings and regional meetings.

Institutional Language Policies:

To achieve the objectives listed above and to ensure the success of the work in the context of the areas of involvement, the RIFL will encourage the creation of virtual spaces for language promotion by working on the development and implementation of institutional language policies. In the first instance it will involve an inventory of the existing policies, regulations and practices in member institutions, identifying the most relevant models for different contexts and, if necessary, developing new models. Background work in sensitization will no doubt be required with the leaders of member institutions to underline the importance of setting up these measures in order to create a favorable institutional environment for language mobility and intercultural dialogue, to ensure a coherent, sustainable to languages.

Governance of the RIFL:

Under the Regional Vice-presidency for Canada, with the support of all the IOHE Regional Vice-presidencies, the University of Ottawa, through its Official Languages and Bilingualism Institute (OLBI), will chair the RIFL. The IOHE Secretariat will coordinate the RIFL.

A Steering Committee, responsible for the main direction of the RIFL, will be set up. It will be chaired, at first, by the University of Ottawa, and its membership will include representatives from the Conselho de Reitores das Universidades Brasileiras (CRUB), the Asociación Mexicana para la Educación Internacional (AMPEI), the Universidad de Guadalajara, the Universidad Veracruzana, and the Universidad Técnica Particular de Loja.

The RIFL wishes to be very inclusive. Representatives from other institutions will also need to join the Steering Committee to ensure a balanced geographical representation: one representative from the Consejo Superior Universitario Centroamericano (CSUCA), along with one representative from countries that have already shown an interest in the RIFL including, but not limited to, Argentina via the Consejo Interuniversitario Nacional (CIN), and Colombia via the Asociación Colombiana de Universidades (ASCUN).

The Steering Committee will meet virtually twice (2 times) a year and will hold an annual meeting in person during the IOHE General Assembly. An annual report will be submitted to the General Assembly.

Work Schedule:

May – July 2011 - Drafting of the Working Paper
 - Identification of partner institutions

- Aug. - Sept. 2011 - Preparation of a Questionnaire in four languages on the needs and expectations of the institutions

- Oct. - Dec. 2011 - Consultation and feedback from partner institutions
 - Presentation of the Working Paper to the IOHE General Assembly in San Luis Potosi, Mexico
 - Presentations of the Working Paper at two national meetings (AMPEI Conference, Mexico; Mission of the Canadian Universities in Brazil)

- Jan. - Feb. 2012 - Distribution of the Questionnaire and Working Paper to all IOHE member institutions
 - Call for nominations for the chairs to each Area of Activity
 - Identification of special needs and activities suggested by the institutions

- March 2012 - Compilation of needs and suggested activities
 - Finalization of the Vision Paper
 - Preparation of the framework for an Activity Plan

- April 2012 - First meeting of the Steering Committee during the Conference of the Americas in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

- May 2012 - Finalization of an Activity Plan by Area of Activity
 - Drafting of a Work Plan for 2012-2013

**Official Languages and Bilingualism Institute (OLBI)
 University of Ottawa
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