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Implementing Global Competences in Higher Education in Switzerland

Conceptual Considerations

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Abstract

At a time when higher education institutions (HEIs) are shifting their focus from mobility to internationalisation at home and global engagement, this working paper analyses conceptual considerations relevant to the integration of global competences in higher education in Switzerland. This working paper is divided into two main sections. First, it introduces graduate attributes relating to global competences as a reference framework for curriculum development. Second, it examines global competences from the perspective of Swiss higher education, with a particular focus on Universities of Applied Sciences. In summary, these two sections outline relevant parameters essential for the development of impactful global competences programmes in higher education.

In einer Zeit, in welcher Hochschulen ihren Fokus von der Mobilität auf die Internationalisierung im Inland und das globale Engagement verlagern, stellt dieses Arbeitspapier konzeptionelle Überlegungen vor, die für die Integration globaler Kompetenzen in die Hochschulbildung der Schweiz relevant sind. Dieses Arbeitspapier gliedert sich in zwei zentrale Abschnitte. Zunächst werden *Graduate Attributes* von Hochschulabsolvierenden, die sich auf globale Kompetenzen beziehen, als Referenzrahmen für die Curriculumentwicklung vorgestellt. Zweitens werden globale Kompetenzen aus der Perspektive des Schweizer Hochschulwesens, insbesondere der Fachhochschulen, genauer analysiert. Zusammenfassend skizzieren die zwei Teile des Arbeitspapiers relevante Parameter, die für die Entwicklung wirkungsvoller Programme zur Vermittlung globaler Kompetenzen berücksichtigt werden müssen.

1 Introduction

There is little controversy today that higher education institutions should offer students the opportunity to develop skills beyond disciplinary expertise or technical knowledge (Leask 2005, p. 53). This paper aims to examine the role of global competences within Swiss higher education, particularly in professional universities that focus on preparing students for careers in specific fields. In Switzerland, these professional universities are referred to as Universities of Applied Sciences.

This paper arises from a work package report within a project aimed at developing a framework for the integration of global competences into higher education in Switzerland. The framework seeks to serve as a reference guide for higher education institutions in Switzerland interested in offering a global competences certificate to students. Four professional universities are involved in the project: BFH Bern University of Applied Sciences, HES-SO University of Applied Sciences and Arts Western Switzerland, SUPSI The University of Applied Sciences and Arts of Southern Switzerland, and ZHAW Zurich University of Applied Sciences. Within this consortium, two partners, BFH and ZHAW, have already established certificates centred on global competence, namely the Certificate of International Profile (CIP) at ZHAW and the Certificate of Global Competences (CGC) at BFH. The two other consortium partners, SUPSI and HES-SO, issue certificates primarily oriented toward facilitating mobility exchange or acknowledging mobility exchanges within their diploma supplements and transcripts of records.

This paper aims to identify relevant parameters that need to be considered for the development of an overarching curriculum framework tailored to foster students' development of global competences, both in a general context and particularly within Switzerland. In the subsequent sections 2 and 3, we work towards a description of graduate attributes relevant to international higher education. To achieve this, we first explore the conceptualisation of competence before discussing core facets of communicative-linguistic, intercultural, and global competences as well as critical language awareness. The section ends with the identification of eleven graduate attributes that represent a broad spectrum of potential learning outcomes in global competences training. These attributes can form the basis for the development of curricular structures in higher education. Section 4 discusses the shifts and trends surrounding global competences, contextualising these changes within the overarching concept of employability as a guiding principle and mandate of Swiss Universities of Applied Sciences.

Sections 5 and 6 offer detailed insights into two global competences certificate programmes within the consortium partners (ZHAW and BFH), analysing their successes and shortcomings while raising important questions for further consideration.

Section 7 concludes this paper by examining the implications drawn from the different sections for the conceptual framework development of an overarching Global

Competences Certificate programme. Section 7 includes a set of recommendations warranting further attention.

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2 Global competences

This section outlines global competences as a term comprising various competence facets relevant to international, intercultural, global, and communicative-linguistic dimensions.

2.1 Competence modelling (Cognitive, Method, Reflective)

The integration of global competences into curricular structures begins, first and foremost, with a discussion and definition of what is meant by global and what is meant by competence. In this section, we briefly review the term and concept of competence, delineating its pertinent sub-components. It then looks at communicative language ability, before turning to intercultural and global (citizenship) competence and critical language awareness as specific manifestations of competence. A note of caution is appropriate at this point: There is a vast amount of literature on each of these topics, which we will not attempt to represent in this section. We have selected concepts and frameworks that we find useful in further advancing the idea of developing an overarching global certificate framework. There is no doubt that there are other concepts, and similar frameworks under different names and terminologies, that also offer valuable insights.

Delamare Le Deist and Winterton (2005, p. 39-40; also Winterton et al., 2006) propose a multi-dimensional and holistic competence framework consistent with other European approaches that consider knowledge, skills and behaviours as dimensions of competence in competence-based training: “The competences required of an occupation include both conceptual (cognitive, knowledge and understanding) and operational (functional, psycho-motor and applied skill) competences” (Delamare Le Deist & Winterton, 2005, p. 39, cf. also an adaptation of their representation below).

The cognitive, functional, and social competences align with the French distinction between ‘savoir’, ‘savoir faire’, ‘savoir être’. Consequently, knowledge and understanding translate into cognitive competence (savoir), whereas skills refer to functional competence (savoir faire), and behavioural and attitudinal competences pertain to social competence (savoir être). Meta-competence, by contrast, signifies the ability to learn how to learn.

	Occupational	Personal
Conceptual	Cognitive Competence	Meta Competence
Operational	Functional Competence	Social Competence

Table 1: Delamare Le Deist & Winterton (2005, p. 39)

The model presented by Delamare Le Deist and Winterton (2005) can be used for curriculum development in different ways. Within the scope of this project, we rely on Delamare Le Deist and Winterton's comparative analysis of the use of the primary competence dimensions:

Cognitive competence , sometimes also called conceptual, includes Fachkompetenz, Savoir, and Compétences théoriques. Note that Fachkompetenz may include what in the French tradition is referred to as connaissances as opposed to savoir: general cognitive competence (problem-solving strategies) or general world knowledge.	Meta-competence is defined as “the individual's knowledge of their own intellectual strengths and weaknesses, how to apply skills and knowledge in various task situations and how to acquire missing competences”, which “typically include ‘learning to learn’ (...) and ‘coping with uncertainty’” (Nelson & Narens, 1990, qtd. in Winterton et al., 2006, p. 33).
Functional competence (occupational operational competence) is also referred to as Methodenkompetenz, Savoir-faire, or Compétences pratiques. It refers to those skills that “a person who works in a given occupational area should be able to do ... (and) able to demonstrate” (Cheetham & Chivers, 1996, 1998, qtd. in Delamare Le Deist & Winterton, 2005, p. 49).	Social competence is also referred to as Savoir-être or Sozialkompetenz, which includes personal and social competence. Social competence, as a behavioural and attitudinal dimension and refers to the “ability and willingness to cooperate, to interact with others responsibly and to behave in a group and relationally oriented way”, while personal competence “comprises key qualifications for dealing with oneself and is defined in terms of ability and willingness to develop personally, as well as to develop skills, motivation and attitudes to work and to the wider world” (Delamare Le Deist & Winterton, 2005, p. 38).

Figure 1: Key competence dimensions in European context according to Delamare Le Deist and Winterton (2005) and Winterton et al. (2006)

While these competence dimensions are traditionally viewed as distinct, entities, they exhibit considerable conceptual overlap and cannot be separated clearly. For instance, the broader and more general aspect of cognitive competence can be understood as part of functional competence. Additionally, meta-competence also comprises methodological knowledge (e.g., how to learn), such as understanding how to learn, thus intersecting with functional competence, while also sharing a conceptual dimension with cognitive competence. Furthermore, meta-, and social competence, share dimensions associated with personality. In higher education settings, the development of meta- and social competence, therefore, go hand in hand with what is commonly referred to as ‘context studies’.

2.2 Communicative language competence

Competence manifests itself through language and communication. An important aspect of competence modelling, therefore, involves examining models of communicative ability. While numerous language and communication competence models exist, we will briefly highlight those most relevant to the discussion briefly.

In competence modelling, it is important, initially, to distinguish between formal language skills and communicative language ability (cf. Bachman, 1990, on this distinction). While formal language skills are oriented to the language system, communicative language ability is broader as it includes social, pragmatic, and meta-linguistic dimensions. The definition of communicative language ability draws upon Bachman (1990) while acknowledging the contributions of Dell Hymes (1972 on Communicative Competence) and Canale & Swain (1980). Bachman (1990) essentially distinguishes four dimensions of communicative language ability. Firstly, he distinguishes between strategic and language competence. Strategic competence encompasses the type of competence that enables speakers to develop a communicative plan when they activate their language competence (*How do I say it?*). Language competence, in turn, is divided into organisational and pragmatic competence. Organisational competence comprises grammatical and textual competence, while pragmatic competence comprises illocutionary and sociolinguistic competence:

- “Organisational competence comprises those abilities involved in controlling the formal structure of language for producing or recognising grammatically correct sentences, comprehending their propositional content, and ordering them to form texts. These abilities are of two types: grammatical and textual” (Bachman, 1990, p. 87).
- “The notion of pragmatic competence presented here thus includes illocutionary competence, or the knowledge of the pragmatic conventions for performing acceptable language functions, and sociolinguistic competence, or knowledge of the sociolinguistic conventions for performing language functions appropriately in a given context” (Bachman, 1990, p. 90).
- “Sociolinguistic competence is the sensitivity to, or control of, the conventions of language use that are determined by the features of the specific language use context; it enables us to perform language functions in ways that are appropriate to that context” (Bachman, 1990, p. 94).

Communicative language ability reflects the distinctions outlined in section 2.2 on general competence dimensions. Strategic competence largely corresponds to meta-competence, representing the capacity to formulate a communicative plan, while illocutionary and sociolinguistic competence can be categorised under social competence. Effective utilisation of language in an audience-appropriate manner requires speakers to possess situational knowledge, audience-related knowledge as well as relevant experience in coping with situations and audiences. For this, they need a deeper understanding of how relationships are built (social knowledge) and their impact on interpersonal interactions (self-knowledge). Cognitive competence is reflected in the speakers’ underlying organisational competence as well as in the conceptual knowledge about how communication works.

Concerning curriculum development, communicative language ability and its sub-dimensions play an important role in intercultural communicative competence.

2.3 Sub-competences of Global Competences

Global competence encompasses sub-competences which are described below in sections 2.3.1 to 2.3.3.

2.3.1 Intercultural Competence

While the term ‘competence’ is well established in communication and language research, the terminology surrounding the broader topic of competences within the international or global contexts in higher education has lacked consensus. This lack of consensus can be attributed to the dynamic and the ever-changing developments inherent to the field, as well as the apparent similarities these terms exhibit.

While Deardorff’s (2006, p. 33)¹ prominent study on the definition of intercultural competences concluded that they were widely defined as “effective and appropriate behaviour and communication in intercultural situations”, subsequent research, however, by Deardorff and Jones (2012) reiterate the lack of consensus across a range of terms such as intercultural competence, intercultural communicative competence, global competence, or global citizenship, among others (for a more exhaustive list of similar terms, see Deardorff & Jones, 2012; O’Dowd, 2022).

Nevertheless, Deardorff developed the first grounded research-based framework, or model, that has widely been used and expanded upon, identifying five key elements, each contributing to an individual’s overall intercultural competence (Deardorff’s Intercultural Competence Model, 2006/2009).

The five components of the Intercultural Competence Model comprise attitudes, knowledge and comprehension, skills, internal outcomes, and external outcomes. These components encompass various skills needed for successful intercultural communicative situations (Deardorff, 2006) and can be summarised as follows:

1. *Attitudes*: This component of the model focuses on promoting open-mindedness, respect, and empathy towards individuals from different cultures. This includes developing a non-judgmental and accepting mindset, being open to new ideas and opinions, and appreciating cultural diversity.
2. *Knowledge and Comprehension*: This component highlights the importance of acquiring comprehensive knowledge about one’s own and various other cultures. This cultural awareness enables individuals to understand the contexts in which intercultural communication occurs, reducing misunderstandings in such cross-cultural encounters.
3. *Skills*: The skills component encompasses a range of abilities: including to listen, to observe, and evaluate, to analyse, to interpret and relate. This skill set equips individuals with the necessary ability to successfully address and resolve

¹ Note that this study was conducted in the context of higher education. The study participants were various academic stakeholders. Thus, the study does not take into consideration the definition of intercultural competence outside of the academic context.

disagreements and to adjust behaviour and communication styles to suit different (inter)cultural situations.

4. *Desired Internal Outcome*: This component focuses on the transformation that occurs within individuals as they develop intercultural competence. Internal outcomes include increased adaptability, flexibility, and the adoption of ethno-relative views, and increased empathy.
5. *Desired External Outcome*: The desired external outcome pertains to the impact of an individual's intercultural competence on any given intercultural situation. It involves the demonstration of effective and appropriate communication and behaviour in such situations.

An analysis of definitions of intercultural competence reveals a significant emphasis on meta-, social, and functional competence, mirroring Deardorff's process. The process of acquiring intercultural competence commences with self-reflection of one's position towards culture (social competence). to the acquisition of cultural knowledge, although the extent to which this knowledge can be separated from self-knowledge in Deardorff's model remains unclear. Subsequently, the outcomes of this reflection may lead to changes in mindset within the individual. The final stages of this process involve the changes of one's frame of reference and, ultimately, performative acts that reflect these internal changes.

While this model may serve as a compelling educational framework, it further blurs the boundaries between the different competence dimensions. Development in intercultural competence relies heavily on experiential knowledge, thus anchoring it strongly in social competence while incorporating a relatively weaker cognitive dimension. In contrast, communicative language ability heavily leans on organizational competence (i.e., the cognitive and conceptual disposition to produce correct language) with language knowledge constituting a distinctive cognitive component of competence (i.e., the cognitive and conceptual disposition to produce correct language). Language knowledge, therefore, forms a distinctive cognitive component of competence which will have to be taken into consideration as a prerequisite to engage in the intercultural process.

2.3.2 Global (Citizenship) Competence

Global Competences, written in the plural, are referred to in this paper as an educational concept comprising a set of competences contributing to the "development of the whole person in the context of their professional, personal, and social lives and 'the common good'" (Leask, 2015, p. 55). This term serves as an umbrella encompassing what has traditionally been referred to as international, intercultural and global citizenship skills (Leask 2009, p. 209). On the other hand, global competence, in the singular, is understood more specifically as a concept emphasising global citizenship skills and abilities. We will also refer to this competence as global (citizenship) competence. However, it's worth noting that the distinction between the two is not always clear-cut in the literature. In this section, we will briefly revisit the notion of global (citizenship) competence to define its position within the overarching educational framework of global competences. To achieve this, we will first

define global citizenship, before moving to global competence (or competency) in education, and in relation to Deardorff's (2006) framework of intercultural competence.

The concept of global competence in higher education has continually developed over recent decades driven by the changing environment and relevance of internationalisation, cultural exchange, and the world's expanding interconnectedness within the higher education context. Similar to the term intercultural competence, defining global competence proves challenging. It emerges in response to the notion of the "citizenship gap", where "the globalization of migration, production, regulation and conflict construct rights without sufficient institutions to enforce them, identities without membership, and participation for some at the expense of others" (Brysk & Gershon 2004, p. 209; cf. also Cox 1996, p. 26-27).

According to Schattle (2018, p. 705), global citizenship today "refers to dispositions and mindsets of everyday people who engage not only within their immediate political communities but also beyond them". Global citizenship is embodied by global citizens. Drawing from Richard Falk and John Urry, Schattle (2018, p. 705) defines a global citizen as:

as a mixture of global cosmopolitans embracing other cultures; global activists campaigning on behalf of causes such as human rights, environmental sustainability, and the elimination of world poverty; global reformers seeking more just and democratically responsive governing institutions; global managers working across the breadth of government, business, and civil society to address common problems facing the world; and global capitalists who pursue their economic interests without any strong bonds of political affiliation or engagement.

The idea of global (citizenship) competence can be traced back to the emergence of internationalisation efforts in higher education during the mid-20th century (cf. De Wit, 2010). Universities recognised the importance of preparing students for a globalised world by providing opportunities for study abroad, international exchanges, and exposure to diverse perspectives. Internationalisation efforts became more popular as universities endeavoured to provide students with the requisite skills and abilities to engage effectively across borders (cf. O'Dowd, 2022). Global competence, or global competency, according to Fernando Reimers (qtd. in Schattle, p. 707) encompasses three dimensions, also called the three A's of globalization (affective, action and academic dimensions, respectively):

(1) A positive disposition toward cultural difference and a framework of global values to engage indifference. This requires a sense of identity and self-esteem but also empathy toward others with different identities. An interest and understanding of different civilizational streams and the ability to see those differences as opportunities for constructive, respectful and peaceful transactions among people. This ethical dimension of global competency includes also a commitment to basic equality and rights of all persons and a disposition to act to uphold those rights.

(2) An ability to speak, understand and think in languages in addition to the dominant language in the country in which people are born.

(3) Deep knowledge and understanding of world history, geography, the global dimensions of topics such as health, climate and economics and of the process of globalization itself (the disciplinary and interdisciplinary dimension) and a capacity to think critically and creatively about the complexity of current global challenges.

From a historical perspective, having its initial confinement within the foreign language curriculum, the notion of global competence expanded beyond the narrow focus on language and cultural understanding (cf. O'Dowd, 2022), and multidimensional frameworks for crucial global involvement skills, attitudes, and knowledge were introduced. These frameworks emphasised intercultural communication in line with Deardorff (2006), critical thinking, empathy, and awareness of global issues (see Leask, 2015, or O'Dowd, 2022, for a more comprehensive overview and discussion of different frameworks).

The development of global competence frameworks and the increasing significance of the internationalisation of higher education institutions has led to a growing emphasis on (inter)cultural competence and sensitivity. Consequently, universities have started to shift their focus toward integrating global issues into various academic disciplines and curricula, as well as campus-wide initiatives aimed at promoting global competence and fostering a sense of global citizenship among students. These ongoing initiatives aim to equip students with the capacity to analyse and address global challenges from a multidisciplinary perspective (cf. Bennett, 2004; Hunter et al., 2006; Deardorff & Jones, 2012; Leask, 2015; Davies et al., 2018, particularly chapters 17, 18, and 19).

Global competence further expands upon the foundations laid by Deardorff's (2006) model by highlighting not only individual cultural interactions but also an awareness of global systems, challenges, and opportunities. Furthermore, it reflects the interdependence of societies, economies, and cultures on a global scale (cf. Boix Mansilla & Jackson, 2022).

Global competence expands upon Deardorff's model by emphasizing the following:

1. *Global Awareness*: In addition to cultural awareness, global competence involves an understanding of global trends, international relations, and the impact of global forces on local communities. This includes knowledge of transnational issues such as climate change, economic interdependence, and social justice (cf. Van Roekel, 2010).
2. *Critical Thinking*: Global competence encourages critical thinking about complex global challenges. Individuals are encouraged to analyse multifaceted issues, consider diverse viewpoints, and formulate informed perspectives on global matters (cf. OECD, 2018, p. 16).
3. *Cross-cultural Collaboration*: While intercultural competence emphasises individual interactions, global competence emphasises collaboration across cultures and national boundaries to address global challenges. Effective global citizens are adept at working with individuals from diverse backgrounds to achieve shared goals (cf. O'Dowd, 2020).

4. *Responsible Global Engagement*: Global competence emphasises ethical and responsible engagement with global issues. This includes an awareness of power dynamics, a commitment to social responsibility, and an understanding of how one's actions can contribute to positive global change (cf. Roberts, 2013).

In terms of competence modelling, global (citizenship) competence introduces a more robust academic dimension to graduate attributes. It encompasses systemic knowledge regarding how the world functions at inter-regional, international, or even global levels. This knowledge includes an understanding of shared problems and challenges, as well as possible approaches to address them. Similar to intercultural and communicative competence, global competence involves the capacity to integrate this knowledge to develop action plans. Moreover, it entails a shift in mindset at a broader social and political scale, beyond intercultural and communicative self-development.

2.3.3 Critical Language Awareness

The ability of Individuals to communicate effectively across linguistic and cultural boundaries becomes increasingly important as they engage with other cultures and confront global challenges. Consequently, linguistic, and communicative competences are often regarded as important components in the development of global competences. Within the context of higher education, global competences and Critical Language Awareness (CLA) have formed a symbiotic, mutually beneficial relationship. The following section explores the interplay between global competences and CLA, offering a brief overview of the latter and highlighting how it contributes to global competences development.

The concept of Critical Language Awareness (CLA) is founded in sociolinguistics and critical applied linguistics. It emerged in response to the growing recognition that language is not merely a neutral means of communication but a dynamic reflection of power, identity, and culture. The historical trajectory of CLA can be traced back to the mid-20th century when linguists and educators began to critically examine language use within diverse social and cultural contexts.

In the 1970s, research by Bernstein and Class (1971) and Bourdieu (1977) unveiled the connections between language, social class, and educational attainment, laying the foundations for CLA. The concept developed further as linguists expanded the discourse, emphasizing the need to analyse language use through a critical lens that considers power dynamics, linguistic imperialism, and the impact of language policies (cf. Holliday et al., 2010; Fairclough, 2014).

As established above, global competence is a complex concept. Inherent skills encompassing cultural awareness, effective communication, and the ability to engage with global issues are deemed crucial to global competences development and are strongly connected with the concept of CLA. Global competences involve understanding and navigating the complexities of cross-cultural interactions and global

challenges. Language serves as both a conduit and a reflection of these complexities, making CLA an essential element of global competences development.

CLA fosters linguistic empathy, which denotes a sensitivity to the numerous nuances of language use, including accents, dialects, and language variations (cf. Iyer, 2019). This sensitivity is crucial for effective cross-cultural communication (compare also to Deardorff, 2006), enabling individuals to overcome linguistic barriers, and to engage in meaningful interactions. Linguistic empathy recognises that language is a dynamic and ever-evolving component of culture, and it encourages individuals to approach linguistic differences with curiosity and respect.

Furthermore, language is intricately intertwined with cultural identities. CLA encourages individuals to explore the cultural underpinnings of language, revealing the historical, social, and political contexts that shape linguistic choices (cf. Fairclough, 2014). By understanding how language is connected to cultural values, individuals can navigate intercultural interactions with greater awareness and prevent misunderstandings tied to language and communication (cf. Deardorff, 2006; Fairclough, 2014; O'Dowd, 2022).

Finally, CLA emphasises the global power dynamics inherent in language use. Within CLA, individuals are encouraged to critically examine issues such as linguistic imperialism and the impact of dominant languages on marginalised communities or in multilingual contexts. This awareness enables individuals to challenge linguistic inequalities and advocate for linguistic diversity in a globalised world.

Global competences are thus linked with the cultivation of CLA. CLA highlights the significance of language as a tool that shapes identities, influences interactions, and reflects society structures. When combined with the development of global competence, CLA improves the individual's ability to navigate complex cross-cultural contexts, communicate effectively, and contribute to a more inclusive and equitable global community.

3 Graduate attributes

As clarified above, global competences are understood, in this paper, as an umbrella term encompassing what is traditionally referred to as international, intercultural and global citizenship skills (Leask 2009, p. 209). However, they are distinct from graduate attributes. The widely-cited Australian Technology Network Report refers to graduate attributes as

[...] the qualities, skills and understandings a university community agrees its students should develop during their time with the institution. These attributes include, but go beyond, the disciplinary expertise or technical knowledge that has traditionally formed the core of most university courses. They are qualities that also prepare graduates as agents of social good in an unknown future. (Boud & Solomon, 2006, p. 212)

To differentiate between disciplinary and non-disciplinary attributes, Bowden et al. (2000) propose referring to non-disciplinary attributes as generic capabilities. In the context of this paper, we are particularly interested in describing generic capabilities as they relate to global competences, as defined in the preceding section.

Distinguishing between attributes and competences (or competencies) can be nuanced, as these terms are often used interchangeably in the literature. However, we propose the following differentiation: When attributes refer to qualities, skills and understandings of students in the sense of capabilities, then competence can be understood as referring to the underlying ability to develop capabilities (Down et al., 1999, cf. also Bowden & Masters, 1993). At the risk of oversimplifying matters, one might say that capability is more contextualised and transformational, while competence underlies capability and “must be assessed holistically” (IEA, 2021). Typically, therefore, competences are more abstract than capabilities, and yet again more abstract than, for example, skills. In practice, and within the context of the current discussion, the distinction may seem somewhat academic. We will refer to graduate attributes when emphasising competences in the sense of generic capabilities which are developed in the course of a programme of study, and which constitute key characteristics of graduating students.

This section briefly summarises, drawing upon the preceding discussion in section 2, relevant graduate attributes that can be derived from considerations concerning international, intercultural, global, and communicative-linguistic competence. In doing so, we consider existing descriptions of graduate attributes such as Deardorff and Jones (2012), Morais and Ogden (2011), Leask (2015), OECD (2018), Council of Europe (2020), National Education Association (2010) and the European Parliament (2023).

In Table 2, we have compiled a list of 11 relevant graduate attributes that represent different competence dimensions in *can-do* form which are central to the development of global competence within the framework of a global competence certificate for students. Where authors provide overlapping descriptions, we chose the version

that appeared to comprehensibly capture a particular ability. Attributes were amalgamated where they addressed similar areas but added complementary elements to one another. Additionally, we included columns to denote the type of competence primarily developed by each attribute, as well as the cognitive, affective, and behavioural dimensions they seem to encompass (cf. components of attitudes according to Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). Notably, two of the 11 attributes have been subdivided into sub-attributes (attributes 9 and 10). The attributes in Table 2 can be used as a basis for further adaptation, following the consultation cycle outlined in Leask (2015).

When aligning the 11 attributes with the discussion on competence modelling outlined earlier, the following considerations seem relevant for curriculum development:

1. Three out of eleven attributes have been identified as primarily related to social competence, while four contain greater emphasis on cognitive competence. Two attributes focus on meta-competence and two primarily on functional competence. However, it is equally clear that the attributes are strongly inter-dependent with some serving as prerequisites for others (e.g., social and functional competence presupposes cognitive competence). For curriculum development, the scaffolding of these competences should be taken into consideration. Scaffolding may imply that knowledge is built up first and then brought into connection with other competence dimensions. It may also mean that more functionally oriented dimensions, such as communicative competence, might appear at a later stage in the curriculum. Furthermore, complexity of the dimensions will need to be taken into consideration. Some attributes that involve engagement in the world may require all of the skills, so project work involving field knowledge and direct exposure, and subsequent reflection, may be included towards the end of the curriculum.
2. In six out of eleven attributes, we can clearly derive an action-related dimension from the description. This means that the ability to act should form a perceptive component of a global competence curriculum. The types of action, or readiness to act, visible in the attributes are related to knowledge, but also to manifestations of thinking and students' mindsets. Four of the six action-related attributes focus on global citizenship and intercultural competence; two specifically include communication and language.
 - Applying knowledge
 - Demonstrate awareness
 - Demonstrate thinking about the world
 - Demonstrate interest / curiosity / engagement
 - Demonstrate communication skills
 - Demonstrate language skills
3. Six of eleven attributes involve personal competence as a sub-dimension of social competence. This clearly highlights the close interconnection between any type of competence developed and person-related, experiential skills. For curriculum development, therefore, the self-reflective dimension will need to play an important part.

Authorship	No	Graduate attributes	Type of competence	Sub-competence	Cognitive	Affective	Behavioural	Relation to Global Competence
Deardorff & Jones (2012)	9	Informed frame of reference shift: adaptability, flexibility, ethno-relative view, empathy	Social competence	Personal competence	Knowledge about self in relation to concepts (adaptability, flexibility, ethno-relativity, empathy)	Value relevance of concepts and self-knowledge	(-)	Intercultural competence
Morais & Ogden (2011)	9.1	Students recognize their own limitations and ability to engage successfully in an intercultural encounter.	Social competence	Personal competence, functional	Knowledge about self in relation to concepts (own intercultural limitations); knowledge about cultural limitations	Value relevance of concepts and self-knowledge	(-)	Intercultural competence
OECD (2018a)	9.2	Attitudes of openness, respect for people from different cultural backgrounds and global mindedness	Social competence	Personal competence	Knowledge about self in relation to concepts (openness, respect)	Value relevance of concepts and self-knowledge	(-)	Intercultural competence / global citizenship
Deardorff & Jones (2012)	10	Effective and appropriate communication and behaviour in an intercultural situation [To have the ability to engage successfully in intercultural encounters (Morais & Ogden, 2011)]	Functional competence	also Social competence	Knowledge and understanding of effectiveness of communication in intercultural encounters	Value importance of communication in intercultural encounters	Willingness to engage in intercultural encounters	Intercultural competence, communicative language ability, CLA
C1 Descriptors for pluricultural repertoire, (Council of Europe, 2020)	10.1	Can identify differences in socio-linguistic/pragmatic conventions, critically reflect on them, and adjust his/her communication accordingly.	Functional competence	also Social competence	Knowledge about pragmatics and sociolinguistics	(-)	Readiness to communicate in accordance with conventions	Communicative language ability, intercultural competence, CLA
	10.2	Can sensitively explain the background to, interpret and discuss aspects of cultural values and practices drawing on intercultural encounters, reading, film, etc.	Functional competence	also Social competence	Knowledge of cultural values and practices	(-)	Readiness to communicate sensitively	Communicative language ability, intercultural competence, CLA
	10.3	Can explain his/her interpretation of the cultural assumptions, preconceptions, stereotypes, and prejudices of his/her own community and of other communities that he/she is familiar with.	Functional competence	also Personal / Social competence	Knowledge about assumptions, preconceptions, stereotypes	(-)	Readiness to explain own interpretation	Communicative language ability, intercultural competence, CLA
	10.4	Can deal with ambiguity in cross-cultural communication and express his/her reactions constructively and culturally appropriately in order to bring clarity One of the objectives of the EU's language policy is ... for every EU citizen to master two other languages in addition to their mother tongue.	Functional competence	also Personal / Social competence	Knowledge about cross-cultural communication	(-)	Readiness to deal with ambiguity	Communicative language ability, intercultural competence, CLA
European Parliament (2023)	11	language policy is ... for every EU citizen to master two other languages in addition to their mother tongue.	Functional competence	also Social competence	(-)	(-)	Readiness to master several languages	Intercultural communicative competence / Global citizenship

Authorship	No	Graduate attributes	Type of competence	Sub-competence	Cognitive	Affective	Behavioural	Relation to Global Competence
Deardorff & Jones (2012)	9	Informed frame of reference shift: adaptability, flexibility, ethno-relative view, empathy	Social competence	Personal competence	Knowledge about self in relation to concepts (adaptability, flexibility, ethno-relativity, empathy)	Value relevance of concepts and self-knowledge	(-)	Intercultural competence
Morais & Ogden (2011)	9.1	Students recognize their own limitations and ability to engage successfully in an intercultural encounter.	Social competence	Personal competence, functional	Knowledge about self in relation to concepts (own intercultural limitations); knowledge about cultural limitations	Value relevance of concepts and self-knowledge	(-)	Intercultural competence
OECD (2018a)	9.2	Attitudes of openness, respect for people from different cultural backgrounds and global mindedness	Social competence	Personal competence	Knowledge about self in relation to concepts (openness, respect)	Value relevance of concepts and self-knowledge	(-)	Intercultural competence / global citizenship
Deardorff & Jones (2012)	10	Effective and appropriate communication and behaviour in an intercultural situation [To have the ability to engage successfully in intercultural encounters (Morais & Ogden, 2011)]	Functional competence	also Social competence	Knowledge and understanding of effectiveness of communication in intercultural encounters	Value importance of communication in intercultural encounters	Willingness to engage in intercultural encounters	Intercultural competence, communicative language ability, CLA
C1 Descriptors for pluricultural repertoire, (Council of Europe, 2020)	10.1	Can identify differences in socio-linguistic/pragmatic conventions, critically reflect on them, and adjust his/her communication accordingly.	Functional competence	also Social competence	Knowledge about pragmatics and sociolinguistics	(-)	Readiness to communicate in accordance with conventions	Communicative language ability, intercultural competence, CLA
	10.2	Can sensitively explain the background to, interpret and discuss aspects of cultural values and practices drawing on intercultural encounters, reading, film, etc.	Functional competence	also Social competence	Knowledge of cultural values and practices	(-)	Readiness to communicate sensitively	Communicative language ability, intercultural competence, CLA
	10.3	Can explain his/her interpretation of the cultural assumptions, preconceptions, stereotypes, and prejudices of his/her own community and of other communities that he/she is familiar with.	Functional competence	also Personal / Social competence	Knowledge about assumptions, preconceptions, stereotypes	(-)	Readiness to explain own interpretation	Communicative language ability, intercultural competence, CLA
	10.4	Can deal with ambiguity in cross-cultural communication and express his/her reactions constructively and culturally appropriately in order to bring clarity One of the objectives of the EU's language policy is ... for every EU citizen to master two other languages in addition to their mother tongue.	Functional competence	also Personal / Social competence	Knowledge about cross-cultural communication	(-)	Readiness to deal with ambiguity	Communicative language ability, intercultural competence, CLA
European Parliament (2023)	11		Functional competence	also Social competence	(-)	(-)	Readiness to master several languages	Intercultural communicative competence / Global citizenship

Table 2: Proposed graduate attributes for competence development for a Certificate of Global Competence

4 External factors

In this section, we will briefly look at the rationales underlying the promotion of global competences, which encompass the broader motivations behind establishing global competences programmes in higher education institutions. Subsequently, we will touch on one educational concept that is of key importance to the Swiss higher education context, and particularly to Universities of Applied Sciences (UAS): Employability.

4.1 Towards value-based rationales

Since the turn of the new millennium, a noticeable shift has emerged within the discourse on internationalisation. Higher education institutions increasingly recognised the potential risks associated with excessive commercialisation, particularly as they relate to education quality, institutional standing, and student enrolment, both national and international (Knight 2012). As a result of these concerns, greater attention has been directed towards internationalising the curriculum.

Jones and Killick (2007, cf. also Studer 2021) state that the rationales for internationalisation of the curriculum can be grounded in either pragmatism or values. Pragmatism rationales revolve around the necessity for students to acquire skills and insights essential for thriving in an increasingly globalised society, often extending to both professional and personal spheres. The emphasis lies on graduates who can effectively perform in various capacities. These rationales align with the perspective that universities contribute to creating a skilled workforce that enhances a nation's global competitiveness and impact. On the other hand, value-driven rationales tend to be associated with concepts of global citizenship, accountability, moral principles, and equity. These rationales likely encompass broader global concerns like poverty alleviation, human rights, and sustainability. While the specific subjects and skills these rationales aim to develop may differ slightly, the value-oriented approach seeks to cultivate a foundational set of attitudes and beliefs influencing the application of knowledge and competencies. Thus, they aim to produce graduates with heightened cultural and environmental sensitivity, fostering values such as social inclusion, cultural pluralism, and world citizenship. Additionally, they emphasise the development of broadmindedness, understanding, and respect for the diversity of people, cultures, values, and ways of living, while also fostering an awareness of the nature of racism. This approach further underscores the importance of values like respect for other cultures, openness through withholding judgment, and fostering curiosity and discovery (Jones & Killick, 2007, Chapter 9, p109 - 119).

This perspective is further underscored by the OECD rationales for the development of global competences (OECD, 2018) which emphasise the holistic growth of students as individuals within a global context. Here, the focus is not only on employability skills, but highlighting the interconnectedness of being socially responsible citizens:

1. *Improving employability within the worldwide economy.* To effectively engage as participants within an increasingly “complex, diverse, and interdependent global economy”, students will not only need to be decidedly literate, but they should also have the capacity to analyse various scenarios while creatively devising solutions to novel issues.
2. *Promoting harmonious existence within multicultural societies.* Students, today, are maturing within societies that are undergoing heightened diversity due to unparalleled global migration trends.
3. *Facilitating proficient and responsible communication and learning among youth* through both traditional and contemporary media. Younger generations must acquire the skills to discern between propaganda and reliable information, simultaneously mastering the art of constructive self-expression in both online and offline domains.
4. *Contributing to the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals* established by the United Nations. Educational efforts aimed at developing global competences can effectively involve future generations in addressing the management and potential resolution of social, political, economic, and environmental challenges as presented in the SDGs by 2030.

In higher education institutions across Europe, the call for the development of value-based global attributes coincides with a powerful trend towards internationalising universities ‘at home’. These initiatives aim to embrace the inner diversity of European societies and promote equality of opportunity for all students irrespective of their background. By embedding principles of internationalisation into the broader framework of education, universities are creating environments where both domestic and international students can benefit from global, international, intercultural perspectives. One aspect of this trend is the integration of international students as integral members of the university community (Jones & Killick, 2013). Rather than viewing them as separate entities, universities are striving to incorporate them into the fabric of the campus life, recognizing their diverse backgrounds and perspectives. Furthermore, there is a growing demand for recognition of students’ international experiences through specialised certificate programmes.

When looking at existing global competences development programmes for students in North America and Europe, where these supplementary certificates were initially introduced, one notices that they were designed to equip students with the necessary skills for effective engagement in a globalised world. This commitment is apparent in institutional rationales such as stipulated by the *Association of American Colleges and Universities* (AAC&U). The AAC&U, in its programme entitled *Liberal Education and Global Citizenship: The Arts of Democracy*, strives “to enhance global education and equip future college graduates with the skills to be more informed, socially responsible, and engaged citizens of the nation and the world” (Jorgenson and Shultz, 2012, p. 7-8).

Another key objective of these certificates is to address the multifaceted concept of employability, which is closely linked to an individual’s possession of global competence. As the job market continues to evolve, individuals who actively cultivate these

skills position themselves as more competitive and adaptable candidates. Employability in the future job landscape depends on a combination of traditional employability attributes and a strong focus on acquiring and demonstrating the skills necessary for the changing world of work. Supplementary certificates can be viewed as a means to validate the acquisition of this experience and these skills.

While existing programmes may be broad, encompassing global, international and intercultural dimensions, there are certificates, especially in Europe, which place a stronger emphasis on practical aspects that are particularly relevant to the field or future profession. In this context, students' employability is foregrounded. Other programmes are more holistic in that they prioritise the cultivation of altruistic qualities and the development of ethical character, focusing on the broader goal of nurturing individuals who exhibit moral and ethical behaviour. This holistic approach is particularly evident in the northern American certificates where the primary emphasis is on civic engagement and the cultivation of social responsibility, often with a more domestically-centred perspective. While these programmes do address global aspects, they tend to do so within the familiar confines of a domestic context. It is evident that the concept of global exchange and engagement, despite its growing prominence, is still in its developmental stages within the academic landscape.

4.2 Employability

The concept of employability has become increasingly significant in the landscape of higher education, representing a crucial objective for universities worldwide. Universities have responded to the evolving needs of society by preparing students to become not only successful professionals but also effective global citizens who can navigate the complexities of an interconnected world (Leask, 2015). In this sense, employability extends beyond mere job placement; it encapsulates a set of skills, attributes, and understandings that enhance graduates' likelihood of securing employment, contributing to the workforce, and thriving in their chosen occupations.

However, employability has traditionally been understood and measured as career success and has usually been considered an achievement that students have found employment upon or shortly after graduation. This understanding of employability is echoed by Guilbert et al. (2016, p. 72-73) who describe it as “a set of achievements—skills, understandings and personal attributes—that makes graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations, which benefits themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy”, or as a dynamic “process that influences an individual's chances of a job and steps in the internal and external labor market” (Guilbert et al., 2016, p. 107).

Against a narrow definition of the term, Forrier and Sels (2003) believe that employability changes constantly, making it not only difficult to define, but also difficult to measure. Nevertheless, authors generally support the idea that employability entails multifaceted dimensions, especially when understood against the backdrop of global competences development and graduate attributes, as highlighted by the OECD (2018).

Harvey (2001) emphasises the relationship between employability and graduate attributes. Accordingly, graduates should possess and demonstrate specific attributes to secure jobs:

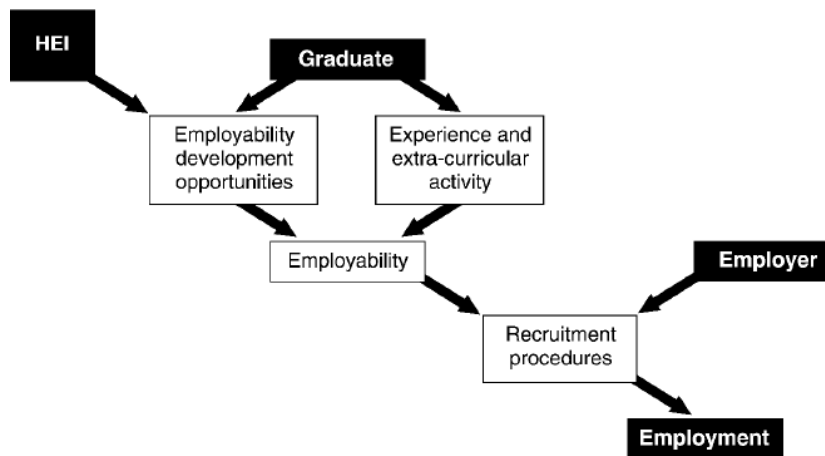


Figure 2: A model of employability-development and employment (Harvey, 2001)

Regardless of what these graduate attributes entail in detail, Harvey's model highlights some factors that contribute to the development of graduate attributes connected to employability, namely *experience* and *extra-curricular activities*.

It is unsurprising that experience and extra-curricular activities hold significant importance for universities offering professionally oriented degree programmes. According to the website of *swissuniversities*, the employment rates of young graduates are notably high, various factors contribute to this success. One such factor is the country's transdisciplinary degree programs, which equip students with versatile skills and knowledge. Additionally, Switzerland's dual education system plays a pivotal role, as a considerable proportion of young individuals entering higher education are already professionally trained.

The Swiss higher education system caters for young professionals generally, and specifically through higher education institutions such as universities of applied sciences (UAS) whose mandate is to offer degree programmes that are of professional relevance and in demand. Recent statistics from the Central Statistics Office (Bundesamt für Statistik 2022) confirms the effectiveness of this approach, revealing that 93% of fresh tertiary graduates "were employed in a job that matched their level of education or the professional qualifications acquired during their studies."

Achieving a high rate of employability upon completion of UAS degree programs requires strong collaboration between the universities and industry partners. Thus, UAS actively encourage the engagement of industry partners to a significant degree (FH Switzerland, n.d.). This collaboration aims to define and develop the core competences or skills essential for succeeding in the job market post-graduation. The following competences, sourced directly from the FH Switzerland website (FH Switzerland, n.d.), exemplify this approach:

- What skills characterise UAS graduates?
 - Competences before studying at a UAS
 - Specific competences pertinent to the chosen profession and preparatory competences for beginning studies.
 - Social competences (teamwork, dealing with criticism, maintaining professional relationships)
 - Competences after UAS studies (Bachelor, Master)
 - Professional competence (technical know-how, assertiveness, career-enabling orientation)
 - Methodological competence (solution-oriented skills, dealing with complexity, methods of applied research)
 - Self-competence (independence, goal and result orientated work, acting responsibly, willingness to learn)
 - Social skills (teamwork, communication, working and acting interdisciplinarily)
- What working world experience are prerequisites to attending a UAS programme?
 - The vocational pathway allows young individuals to acquire business and professional experience during their apprenticeship, preparing them for the transition to the working world after completing compulsory schooling.
 - Thus, students typically possess a wide range of work experience before commencing their studies.
 - Prospective students with a high school diploma are typically required to complete a mandatory internship, ensuring that they enter UAS studies with practical work experience.
- High employability of UAS graduates:
 - High «employability» is measured through various criteria
 - Successful job placement post-graduation
 - Sustained employment,
 - Adaptability in the labour market, and
 - Effective and responsible execution of job responsibilities.

As evident from the delineation of core competences, the skills and experiences acquired by UAS students align closely with the criteria outlined by Harvey (2001) as essential for attaining a high employability rate. This is also exemplified by the contrast between employability of a UAS graduate and a graduate from a traditional university, which highlights practical experience and internships as the crucial difference between these two types of graduates (FH Switzerland, n.d.).

To conclude, employability is highlighted as a central tenet of higher education, aligning with universities' commitment to preparing graduates for success in a rapidly changing and interconnected global society. In addition to employment rates, employability encompasses specific graduate attributes and practical competences, positioning graduates to excel not only in their careers but also as responsible global citizens. Swiss UAS exemplify this commitment through their emphasis on practical experiences and strong industry connections. However, there appears to be less emphasis on graduate attributes that may not directly contribute to students' immediate employability. This aspect should be considered in discussions of global competences development and employability as it could inform the creation of a more comprehensive curriculum that addresses a broader spectrum of skills across disciplines.

5 Unity in Diversity? The Certificate of International Profile at ZHAW, Switzerland

ZHAW Zurich University of Applied Sciences established a Certificate of International Profile (CIP, international study track) in 2018 after a long consultation process within its International Affairs Commission. The framework for this certificate was outlined in a set of guidelines published under the title 'ZHAW Certificate International Profile, 2018' (ZHAW Certificate International Profile, 2018). Each of the university's eight schools had the autonomy to tailor the CIP to suit its specific needs and objectives. As a result, four schools opted to introduce their own version of the CIP.

However, four schools have not implemented the CIP to date. Among these, two schools have not implemented the CIP as their study programmes either include an international track alongside the regular programme (International Business in the School of Management and Law) or because their study profiles already include a strong inter- or transnational orientation (multilingualism, intercultural competence in the School of Applied Linguistics).

The two remaining schools, namely the School of Architecture, Design and Civil Engineering and the School of Applied Psychology, have not yet implemented the programme due to differing reasons: In these schools, internationalisation is perceived to be in its infancy, their study focus is primarily local and there appears to be insufficient demand for the CIP. Specifically, the School of Architecture, Design and Civil Engineering views the CIP as imposing additional burden on students and the school, which, considering the small number of students opting for a mobility, is not worthwhile investing. At the time of publication, the School of Psychology, however, has initiated a process to consider implementing the CIP in the near future. In the subsequent sections, we will provide a brief overview of the ZHAW guidelines. Following that, we will review the key characteristics of the CIP as implemented by schools that have adopted it, focusing particularly on its perceived success through the lens of the main actors involved in its implementation. Finally, we will conclude by summarizing key points to consider for the re-conceptualisation of the CIP.

The International Profile consists of three competence areas: (1) Linguistic Competence, (2) International Experience, (3) Intercultural Competence. The framework stipulates that it is mandatory that all three areas of competence are covered in department-specific CIPs. It further lays down minimal requirements that need to be fulfilled by students in order to qualify for the award of a CIP:

1. First, students are required to provide evidence of competence in a foreign language at level C1. If the foreign language is not English, students must provide evidence of their English language competence at the level B2.

2. Second, students are required to complete some of their studies through English (English-medium instruction), however, no minimum number of ECTS credits are stipulated. English-medium instruction modules may be completed outside ZHAW.
3. Third, students are required to provide evidence of international exposure in the form of a stay abroad of at least 8 weeks or 6 ECTS credits. Departments can decide which option they want to implement.
4. Fourth, students are required to complete at least one module in the field of intercultural competence and communication, equivalent to 2 ECTS credits. The module design and type of assessment are defined by the respective department.
5. Finally, students are required to write a reflection paper on the intercultural learning process. The assessment grid to be used is defined by the respective department. The reflection paper can also be a field report that covers certain predefined points. The departments define individually what is to be understood by a reflection paper.

The ZHAW CIP adopts a flexible structure and essentially delegates implementation to the individual schools or subordinate units. The framework is structural and modular in that it predefines few mandatory elements but does not specify learning outcomes, didactic approach, or assessment. It does not foresee a quality maintenance process either; the implementation of the framework is entirely in the hands of the individual schools. The rationale for implementing the CIP is left to the individual schools.

To facilitate the implementation of the CIP, a university-wide module was developed, which offers pre-departure training to students planning a semester abroad (ICOS – Intercultural Competence of Outgoing Students). The module is offered centrally by the university and is open to students from all schools and disciplines. It can be integrated into the CIP programme but may also be completed independently. ICOS broadly pursues the following learning goals, see Table 3 below:

Competence & Expertise	Learning goal
Professional skills	F5: Knowledge of concepts of diversity
Methodological expertise	M3: Analytical capability M4: Capability to make interventions
Social competence	S4: Capability of coping with diversity and heterogeneity
Self-competence	S5: Capability of self-reflection

Table 3: Learning objectives of ICOS as published on the internal LMS (cf. ZHAW 2024a)

ICOS involves reflection on one's intercultural competences based on the IDI (Intercultural Development Inventory). During the module, students are given the opportunity to describe critical incidents. All schools of ZHAW can recommend ICOS to students wishing to go abroad, and particularly to those enrolling for the CIP, but they are free to develop and offer alternative modules for similar purposes.

5.1.1 The CIP in the different schools of ZHAW

The CIP at the ZHAW School of Engineering

Some facts about the CIP at the School of Engineering (SoE):

- Fulltime students can sign up for the CIP during the first year of their studies; parttime students in their second year. The students then commence the programme in the second and third year, respectively.
- Students must have above average grades (75% or higher) in the first year (assessment).
- Students must have an intermediate level of English (in-house language test or recognised B2 English certificate) to be admitted to the CIP programme.
- In preparation for the CIP programme, the SoE offers students the option of an English pre-IP course (English for Academic Purposes); there is also an option for exam preparation for the C1 Advanced exam.
- At least 20 ECTS of the regular course content (technical modules) must be completed in English (English-Medium Instruction).
- Students must complete one semester abroad, an internship placement abroad (industry or university) of a minimum of eight weeks or write their bachelor's thesis abroad.
- Students must complete the module ICAM (Intercultural Communication and Management) as part of the CIP.
- Upon completion of all requirements, students receive their diploma together with an International Profile Certificate in English, listing all successfully completed tasks and assessments within the international profile

The SoE was one of the first schools of ZHAW to implement the CIP. Since its implementation, the school has been tracking enrolment, dropout, and completion statistics systematically. While student feedback relating to the programme is collected informally on an ongoing basis, there are no representative evaluations of the CIP to date. One evaluation was conducted by the International Relations Office in 2021, which, however, coincided with Covid19 when travel bans were in place and exchange was heavily restricted. Survey results, therefore, do not seem to be representative. The survey showed a generally high satisfaction rate with the programme. Students indicated slightly lower satisfaction with course offerings through English (English-medium instruction).

A closer look at CIP statistics show that students show considerable initial interest in the CIP as slightly under 20% of all students sign up for the programme (on average 18% in the period 2019-2023). However, when tracking commencement, dropout, and completion rates over time, one can see that the students' interest wanes over the course of the programme. Only c. 12% of all students commence their programme, of which 71% dropped out in the period between 2016 and 2020. At the time of publication, it is unclear why the dropout rate is so high, and the

dropout rate stands at odds with the school's own policy, which aims for a completion rate of 20-30% of all students. Upon request, the following interpretations are offered:

1. The CIP requires additional effort and self-motivation on the part of the students, which they may not be willing or able to invest once they are fully committed within their main programme of study.
2. The level of English language competence (C1) required for completion of the programme may present a challenge for students.
3. Organisational issues may play a role. For example, courses through English (English-medium instruction) are mainly offered during the fifth semester of the fulltime study programme when the school's students usually spend their semester abroad. This makes it more difficult for SoE students to benefit from the full range of English course offerings.
4. While the CIP is advertised by the school, it may be perceived by students and teachers as a measure organizing and facilitating exchange and attracting incoming students rather than an additional in-depth qualification for domestic students.

The ICAM module, which is obligatory for all CIP students, focuses on selected theories and models of intercultural communication that are relevant to engineers. Practical skills (e.g. negotiation techniques) are trained and applied to specific case studies. It is worth noting that the SoE does not make explicit reference to graduate attributes as overarching competence goals for the students apart from the learning objectives (Table 4) reflected in the module description of the module ICAM.

Learning objectives (competence)	Module content
Students know theories and models of intercultural communication and reflect them in relation to their professional practice	Case studies for professional contexts
Students reflect their own communication styles and apply them appropriately and effectively in an intercultural context.	Comparing communication styles, multilingualism
Students extend their communicative skills in intercultural and multilingual settings	Negotiation techniques

Table 4: Learning objectives and module content of ICAM as published on the internal LMS (cf. ZHAW 2024b)

Conclusion: The SoE is the only school that keeps detailed statistics relating to the CIP and has conducted a programme evaluation. The evaluation results, however, may be skewed due to the context in which the survey was conducted. A high completion rate of 20-30% of students is desired by the SoE, which seems challenging given current dropout and low completion figures. While explanations are offered as to the high dropout rate of students, a more detailed analysis of the causes would be desirable.

The CIP at the ZHAW School of Health Sciences

The idea of a CIP at the School of Health Sciences (SoH) was initially developed in 2016 for the study programmes *Occupational Therapy* and *Nursing*, two years before the overarching ZHAW framework came into effect. The Institute of Public Health joined in 2018, followed by the Institutes of Physiotherapy and Midwifery and Reproductive Health in 2020. Students from all institutes apply for the programme using a school-wide learning platform. This platform is introduced to students during the first five teaching weeks of the 2nd semester, after which students can formally apply for the programme. The CIP programme at the SoH consists of the same three components as in the other schools (referred to as *language*, *intercultural competences* and *international engagement*). The exact nature of the CIP programme varies from institute to institute.

While the names of all applicants are recorded by the International Relations Office, the school does not keep detailed enrolment and dropout statistics. No formal programme evaluations have been carried out to date. Despite promotional efforts by the institutes, there is little interest in the CIP and typically only few students apply for the programme. In the Institute of Physiotherapy, for example, 4 students out of 150 joined in 2020; in 2021 and 2022 only 1 did. Other institutes report similar tendencies. For those interested, the school and institutes make significant efforts to facilitate participation. There are no ECTS points awarded for the CIP and it is pursued as an add-on alongside the regular degree programme.

One reason for the limited interest is the intense nature of the regular study program, leaving students with little time to engage in the CIP. Fulltime students, in particular, struggle to allocate resources beyond their core study programme and the language skills with a certificate.

In order to qualify for the CIP, students in the SoH are required to participate in an international experience of a minimum of 3 weeks. Alternatively, students can opt for a work placement of 12 weeks in care or therapy. Only very few students choose an international experience (work placement or studies abroad) that lasts longer than three months.

One important reason why only few students choose to spend more time abroad is that the Swiss professional commission issues strict regulations for the execution of health professions in Switzerland. This problem is of particular concern for students wishing to study abroad. While study abroad is recognized by the school in principle, finding courses abroad that are equivalent to the ones offered at ZHAW is very challenging. As a result, students wishing to study abroad risk missing out on professionally relevant study time and may, in fact, lose a full semester's worth of studies. Within the SoH, there is only one institute in which an international experience has been integrated into the regular study programme.

In the CIP of the SoH, intercultural competence is assessed using the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) twice within a two-year period. The IDI standardly contains reflective components. Students who plan to go abroad may also complete ICOS, the university-wide pre-departure training for students. In addition to assessing and reflecting on their intercultural competences, students at the SoH have to complete one module of their choice (2 ECTS points) that offers course content compatible with the CIP, as, for example, the module *Diversity in Health Professions*, which takes place during the Summer School. The SoH further requires their CIP students to provide proof of a C1-level of English. These language requirements are perceived as a problem by some students. Other foreign languages are no longer required. Students, moreover, are expected to complete 4 ECTS points by attending English-medium modules.

Conclusion: The CIP in the SoH is very thoroughly organised and structured, with a strong focus on intercultural reflective competence. It is decentralised as it allows the school's institutes to specify requirements for the CIP. Despite a clear organisation and good infrastructure, there is a modest return and response from students, not least because regulatory barriers to exchange, and tight study structures make it difficult for students to participate in the CIP.

The CIP at the School of Social Work

The CIP at the School of Social Work (SoSW) was introduced in 2020. Students learn about the CIP programme for the first time in connection with mobility counselling. The CIP is further advertised after their assessment year. Registrations are accepted on a rolling basis; they are not systematically managed: There is no formal application procedure and no compulsory registration for students. In the course of the CIP, students complete a portfolio, which is entirely self-managed by the students. Supervisors then look at the documents. If everything is found to be in order, the students can complete a final reflective report. There is no competence assessment. Competences are tested separately in the ICOS module. Also, there are no low-stake formative assessments.

The CIP in the SoSW relies on a modular structure. This means that modules from the regular study programme may also count towards the CIP. During their main study phase, students must pass a number of international modules from the regular study programme that have been tagged as eligible for the CIP. The school further supports students in their language development with once-off contribution of CHF300 that can be used towards a language exam preparation course. This measure is unique in the ZHAW. Similar to the School of Engineering, studies through English (English-medium instruction) have to be completed to the extent of 2 ECTS credits. Extracurricular experiences are also taken into account for the CIP (e.g. 40h voluntary work outside the curriculum, up until five years before start of study). The final element of the CIP is a reflective report.

The introduction of the CIP was met with great interest by the students. Registrations have been increasing since October 2020. In the period between autumn 2020

and spring 2023, the SoSW has issued seven certificates. Students begin to look more seriously into the CIP after the assessment year, when queries come in about mobility. The school does systematically collect enrolment and dropout statistics. Approximately 8 to 10 students enrol for the CIP every year. At the time of publication, approximately 10 students are studying abroad. Recently, there has been a noticeable uptick in student interest in studies abroad.

While the CIP may be popular with the students as an idea and a concept, the structure of the study programme does not favour CIP enrolment. One third of the BSc programme in the SoSW consists of compulsory practical training, which is completed in social work institutions. The advantages of this are obvious (theory-practice connection during the programme, application of knowledge under real conditions). The practical training is also paid, which offers great advantages for the students, but also determines the focus of the training. As a result, the main study programme is often planned around the practical training and the students' work contracts. The main study programme is highly individual and flexible, with all its advantages and disadvantages. The CIP can only be realistically integrated if all other factors (practical training, choice of modules, individual study planning) work out. The current requirements for the completion of the CIP are considered as an additional barrier for students.

The school at this point does not conduct formal evaluations of the CIP programme as a measure to maintain its quality. While no formal needs analysis was conducted with students, conversations with students reveal that they see themselves working in international enterprises after their studies. In light of the fact that it is not easy to integrate the CIP into the flexible and practice-focused study programme, an evaluation, especially of the challenges, and a subsequent adaptation of the concept would be desirable.

Conclusion: The SoSW has a very flexible and informal CIP structure. The SoSW tries to accommodate all different interests, possibilities and needs. While there is considerable interest in the CIP on the student side and a noticeable uptick in study abroad applications, there is modest enrolment in the CIP, not least because it is considered cumbersome and sets high requirements. While the school offers much flexibility and a potentially attractive programme, the CIP does not seem to address student needs. In the CIP at the SoSW, there is a greater focus on intercultural competence than on language and communicative competence. EMI is a minor element (if at all).

The CIP at the School of Life Sciences and Facility Management

Similar to the School of Health Sciences, the School of Life Sciences and Facility Management (SLSFM) leaves it to the individual institutes to take decisions regarding the promotion, implementation and administration of the CIP. The CIP has been implemented in two out of three institutes (Natural Resource Science and Facility Management) at the time of publication.

The SLSFM has defined minimum requirements for the award of a CIP in the school (cf. summary of requirements as stated in the school's 2019 policy in Table 5). The different degree programmes may define additional requirements if they wish. The minimum requirements as specified in Table 5 do not differ significantly from the ZHAW guidelines.

Area of competence	Minimum requirements ZHAW	Minimum requirements SLSFM
Language competence	Proof of a foreign language at level C1 (if C1 certificate is not for English, proof of English at level B2+ must be provided)	Ditto. Choice of language can be determined individually (no predefined language list)
	Specialised modules in English (no minimum number of ECTS credits)	At least 4 ECTS must be taken in English - at home or abroad (written work in English is also possible)
International experience	At least 8 weeks or at least 6 ECTS credits	Ditto. Possible activities include: Semester abroad Internships abroad/IAESTE internship BA/MA/project work abroad COIL (Collaborative online international learning)
Intercultural competence	Module worth at least 2 ECTS credits, submission of a reflective portfolio.	Ditto. A module will be developed and piloted, first offering in AS 2020. Reflective portfolio can be integrated into the module.

Table 5: Minimum requirements for the award of a CIP in the SLSFM (ZHAW SLSFM 2019, translated from German by authors)

An interesting case is the Institute of Natural Resource Sciences (INRS) that spearheaded internationalisation of the curriculum in the school. The INRS currently has a study minor option for students called minor international profile. Within this international study minor, students are required to complete 44 ECTS credits worth of studies relevant to the development of language, intercultural and international competences. Students must choose between two of the three following options:

1. One full semester abroad (up to 30 ECTS credits)
2. Bachelor's thesis abroad (14 ECTS credits)
3. Work placement International Collaboration (14 ECTS credits)

In case the two completed study options do not yet add up to 44 ECTS credits, students can acquire further ECTS points through a choice between English-medium content modules and interdisciplinary modules such as intercultural competence or modules in the context of external summer / winter schools. Enrolment requirements include a C1 (advanced) level of English or the completion of school-internal language modules (advanced) over the course of four semesters (grade of 75% or higher). This international study minor will be replaced by the CIP in 2024 and the specific requirements outlined in Table 5 will be adopted (4 ECTS credits worth of studies through English, in addition to an international experience worth at least 6 ECTS credits as well as the successful completion of a module on intercultural competence in the order of 2 ECTS credits).

As part of their mandatory international experience, students in the SLSFM can choose between study abroad or work placement. Work placement may mean that students participate in a developmental project abroad (e.g. in Africa). The length

of these stays abroad may vary from 4 weeks to 2 months or longer (INRS recommends a minimum of 2 months). Work placement abroad is recognised for the CIP and can also form part of students' final theses. Students that go abroad on an exchange semester can prepare themselves through pre-departure and re-entry training modules. The SLSFM offers a module entitled Intercultural Competence, which in essence is very similar to the university-wide module ICOS. The school further offers a module entitled *Life and Work in a Multicultural Society*, which students may want to enrol in. The successful completion of such an intercultural module, however, is no requirement for students who enrol in the CIP, as students may seek to receive credit for any other intercultural activity or module, they have engaged in.

The school does not keep detailed statistics relating to CIP enrolment and dropout figures. Enrolment numbers in two of the three institutes of the school are similarly low as in the other schools of ZHAW. INRS reports in average two students per academic year who successfully complete their study minor. In the Institute of Facility Management (IFM), which directly adopted the university CIP guidelines, reported the award of three certificates each in the 2022 and 2023. Regarding why numbers are so low, the IFM mentions high English language requirements as the biggest barrier. Students may not have the time or be willing to prepare for a C1 examination. A similar picture emerges in the Institute of Natural Resource Sciences (INRS), which reports that some students struggle with the C1-requirements in English as they cannot afford the exam fees.

The study programme website (ZHAW SLSFM 2024) states the following overarching learning outcomes for students that choose the CIP as their minor:

- Can communicate and work in different cultural contexts;
- Can use foreign languages;
- Can adapt to new environments and react flexibly to changes;
- Can build an international network.

The learning outcomes stated on the website are broadly reminiscent of the graduate attributes outlined in chapter 1. Apart from these broad learning outcomes, no further overarching learning objectives have been defined. Each module within the CIP, of course, has its own objectives that lead to learning outcomes.

Conclusion: While formulating minimum requirements, the SLSFM pursues a decentralized approach similar to the School of Health Sciences, leaving room to degree programmes for adaptations and individual solutions. The programme is loosely structured. Unlike the SoE, the SLSFM does not track programme enrolment and dropout systematically. Similar to the other schools in ZHAW, the SLSFM does everything it can to motivate students to register for the CIP and shows great flexibility in recognising parts of study for the CIP.

5.1.2 Implications for the development of a unified approach at ZHAW

The discussion of CIP programmes in the different schools at ZHAW shows that interest in the CIP not only varies from school to school but often also from institute to institute. Half of the schools at ZHAW have not implemented the CIP yet, notably the School of Management, Law and the School of Applied Linguistics, the School of Architecture, Design and Civil Engineering and the School of Applied Psychology. This suggests that the current CIP framework does not fully address the needs of the university and/or is not considered of sufficient strategic importance in order to be prioritized. This impression is confirmed also when looking at the schools that have implemented the CIP: While the CIP does seem to have a legitimate place within the schools, a closer look at how it is actually implemented confirms the impression that it is considered a valid, yet low-threshold add-on to the students' portfolio for which neither the students nor the school would need to invest much time.

What is further noticeable, but perhaps unsurprising, is the absence of a unified approach at ZHAW. Responsibility is delegated from top to bottom, leaving it to each school and unit within it to define the purpose and content of the CIP. This leads to a wide array of solutions. When looking at the CIP across the different schools, the following points merit further discussion:

1. Schools seem to share little common understanding as to who should avail of the CIP option. In principle, the certificate is meant for everyone who is willing to put in the extra work. However, apart from minimum requirements, there are significant differences as to the effort required from students to complete the CIP. As a result, the profile of the target audience and the value of the programme remain vague.
2. It is unclear to which degree the CIP should form an integral part of a study programme. In some schools, the CIP programme tends to be perceived as a specialisation, an international orientation, within the study programme rather than an add-on, while in others the opposite scenario seems to apply.
3. All schools report modest to moderate interest in the CIP and/or high dropout rates, which means that the programme in its current form may not address student needs at this point. There are also administrative challenges, regulatory challenges, or capacity challenges, but also simply a lack of priority on both the schools' and the students' sides.
4. Schools report barriers concerning entry requirements and have gone to great lengths to accommodate students' individual needs and requests so as to keep the programme attractive for them. Particularly language requirements are seen as a barrier. Intercultural competence assessments are generally low threshold, which raises questions concerning the overall ambition of the programme. There also is a high degree of flexibility in recognizing prior / other international experience / performance as part of the CIP.
5. The role and nature of course offerings through English are unclear. Are these courses mainly disciplinary courses or context/interdisciplinary courses that happen to be taught in English? What is the rationale behind offering these courses and which competences do students acquire by participating in them?

6. There are very few joint courses offered both across and within schools which students of different disciplines can join as part of their CIP programme.
7. The overall administrative focus tends to lie on self-management of the students' international portfolio; there is little systematic follow-up and / or evaluation of the student performance and learning progress, apart from tracking enrolment and dropout (if at all).
8. There is little explicit focus on actual student competence development and little to no explicit connection to student attributes (but cf. module descriptions ICOS, ICAM, IK)

As a result of this rather heterogeneous picture, a number of questions arise for further development and implementation of a CIP at university or even inter-university level. These include the following (in no specific order):

- What kind of school-wide and / or university-wide courses / modules should be offered, if any? Should a separate entity within or between the institutions take over the coordination of some of these modules? At ZHAW, the following modules were mentioned in the interviews: ICOS, ICAM, IK.
- Can every organisational unit within a university have their own adaptation of the CIP and specify the content of the programme? Should it be school-wide?
- Do students manage their own international portfolio as part of the CIP or is it managed by a designated authority who also assesses the students' performance?
- What language competence level in English should be required for the completion of the CIP? Should other languages be mandatory for the CIP?
- What role do English-medium instruction modules play in the development of student competences, if any?
- What should be the entry requirements for the CIP: low threshold, high threshold? Should there be a minimum grade average?
- Should the university pursue a completion quota and, if so, what would it be?
- Should the CIP be an add-on certificate that requires students to do more than others do in their regular study programme or can the CIP be integrated as a regular component / specialisation within a degree programme that on completion automatically leads to the CIP?
- Can regular modules within a degree programme count towards the CIP if they contain international elements?
- Should the content of the CIP address employment needs and, if so, how are these needs measured?
- Should the CIP have an educational rationale with learning objectives, contributing to graduate attributes, or should it consist of a definition of a process rather than specific content?
- Should the CIP contain assessments?
- Should the university / school / institute support the CIP with money?
- Should ECTS points be awarded for modules completed within the CIP?
- What nature and role does international exposure take (including virtual exchange)?

- To which extent should records be kept on enrolment, progress, and completion? Who should keep those records?
- Regarding the content of CIP course offerings, what role should standardised tests play (e.g. IDI), critical incidents?
- Should there be defined learning objectives or simply guidance towards developing meta-competence (learning how to learn going forward)?
- Should there be a common underlying educational framework (e.g. developmental approach)?
- How should the CIP deal with regulatory barriers?
- What is the role of extracurricular experience for the CIP (e.g. voluntary work, etc.)?
- Should the content of the CIP be needs based, i.e. require needs analyses? If so, who carries out these analyses?
- What role, if any, do work placements have?
- To which extent should the CIP include / complement reporting and reflection done in the context of other programmes (e.g. Erasmus, SEMP)?

6 The Global Competence Certificate at BFH: A centralised approach

In May 2013, the University Executive Board (UEB) gave the mandate to the International Relations Committee to develop a concept for introducing a supplementary certificate for acquiring intercultural and transcultural competences. For this purpose, they allocated funding for the development thereof. Subsequently, representatives from the International Relations and Teaching Committees developed a concept for the implementation of a university-wide "Certificate of Global Competence (CGC)" at BFH based on the existing concepts of the Departments of Social Work and Business. The concept enables the offering of a university-wide standardised supplementary certificate while preserving the autonomy of the departments and not neglecting specific disciplinary requirements.

The CGC was seen as an instrument which would:

1. Enhance institutional reputation (USP)
2. Facilitate the development of staff and student competences
3. Foster interdepartmental networking and collaboration
4. Build upon the existing certificates offered by the School of Social Work and the Business School
5. Align with the strategy outlined by the Rektorenkonferenz der Schweizer Fachhochschulen (now known as swissuniversities) in 2013: "Universities of Applied Sciences enable their students to assert and develop themselves in their disciplines and professions on the international labour market after successfully completing their studies".
6. Align with the BFH performance mandate of 2013 "The BFH promotes international activities in teaching and research and is increasingly perceived as an international education and research institution" (BFH, 2013).

The initial CGC concept (BFH, 2021) received approval from the UEB in July 2014. Subsequently, it underwent revisions and was aligned with the BFH Regulations for the Certificate of Global Competence (RCGC), which were approved on 1 August 2020. The RCGC outline and govern the process for acquisition of the certificate (BFH, 2023).

The objectives and purpose of offering a Certificate of Global Competence are as follows:

	Objective	Purpose
	Students will be encouraged to acquire global competences as part of their degree programme.	Students who obtain the certificate will be qualified to work within an international environment or a global context in Switzerland and will be able to provide unambiguous proof of these skills.
Students	Students who demonstrate the acquisition of global competences are to receive an additional award in the form of a certificate.	Holders of the certificate will be able to demonstrate the additional skills acquired during their degree programme to their future employers.
Lecturers	Lecturers will be encouraged to integrate intercultural and cross-cultural subjects into their modules in a targeted way, or to plan appropriate projects.	The intercultural and cross-cultural awareness of lecturers will be recognised by BFH and enhanced as a result.
Degree Programmes	International and intercultural and cross-cultural aspects will be explicitly built into degree programmes (as a whole module or part of a module or as the subject of a written assignment, etc.).	The reality of international networking and cultural heterogeneity in everyday professional life will be taken into account in degree programmes. Students who do not acquire the certificate will also benefit from this content.
	The subjects of internationality, interculturality and cross-culturality will be incorporated into degree programmes.	This will encourage the integration of intercultural and cross-cultural subjects into existing modules or the development of new modules, proofs of competence or entire curricula.
BFH	The Certificate of Global Competence will add an attractive element to the BFH programme.	The certificate will increase the visibility of BFH's internationality, inter-culturality and cross-culturality. This can be used as a marketing tool for student acquisition in many departments.
	"BFH Modules" can be offered in relation to the certificate and can be taken as (elective) optional subjects for students on several or all degree programmes.	The certificate will promote networking and co-operation within BFH. These BFH modules will represent the first BFH-wide 'diagonal' modules.
Employees	It will be clear to future employers that students who have gained the certificate bring with them demonstrable global competences and are suited to work in international or intercultural and cross-cultural contexts.	The certificate will enhance the profile of the global competence of BFH graduates and thus represents a potential advantage in the job market. The certificate reflects the increasing importance of intercultural and cross-cultural skills on the job market.
Partner Universities	For partner universities, the certificate will offer the opportunity for closer co-operation in the teaching sector.	The certificate will enhance the visibility of international partnerships with other universities. The certificate has the potential to intensify networking with other partner universities in the teaching sector.

Table 6: Certificate of Global Competence (CGC) objectives and purposes

To earn the CGC, students are required to submit a Portfolio of Global Competence. The CGC portfolio (cf. Figure 3: CGC Portfolio (2020 Concept CGC EN)) is built on three thematic pillars, namely knowledge, activities and engagement, and language. It is completed with a synthesis assessment: a personal reflection report. Furthermore, each department provides the students with a detailed list for each of the portfolio sections. A specific number of portfolio points are awarded for each activity or record. It is important to note that portfolio points are not equivalent to ECTS credits. This distinction prevents an undesired blending of the achievements as part of the standard degree programme with those related to the acquisition of the CGC. This also means that portfolio points can be awarded for extra-curricular activities that contribute towards obtaining of the certificate.



Figure 3: CGC Portfolio (2020 Concept CGC EN)

Knowledge encompasses the knowledge of basic theoretical concepts and ways to analyse culture; knowledge of the factors that influence intercultural encounters, such as perception, non-verbal communication; factual knowledge of the student's own culture and other cultures in fields such as religion, politics, economics, or geography. It also entails knowledge of ways in which the individual's own intercultural competence can be continuously developed.

The benchmarks cited in Table 7 below serve as minimum requirements with which students should actively engage with global subjects or interact with those of other countries or cultures. These benchmarks are primarily intended to serve as a basis for departments to integrate the certificate into their degree programmes. For example, completing a module worth 4 ECTS credits with at least 50% of its content focused on intercultural or cross-cultural aspects could earn students 15 portfolio points, equivalent to 2 ECTS credits towards the CGC.

Elements	Description	Portfolio points
BFH modules	Modules in which knowledge and skills in intercultural aspects are explicitly acquired. 2 ECTS equates to 15 portfolio points	30
Written assignment	A maximum of 15 portfolio points can be awarded for a written assignment with an explicitly intercultural focus. The assignment may be a task that is part of a standard degree programme. 2 ECTS equates to 15 portfolio points	15
External equivalence	Compliance with an IRO list of externally recognised theoretical activities, such as specific modules at partner institutions, or high-quality online courses (e.g. Massive Open Online Courses, MOOCs) ⁵	30

Table 7: CGC Knowledge elements

An important part of the Activities and Engagement section (Table 8) of the portfolio is the immersion in culturally challenging situations. Aspects such as duration, cultural distance and cultural isolation are elements that define the intensity of the

learning experience. The regulation specifies that the required minimum 6-week international stay may also be achieved cumulatively. Departments are free to impose stricter requirements in this regard.

	Elements	Description	Portfolio points
Abroad	Semester of studies abroad	Semester at a university abroad	30
	Internship abroad	Internship/volunteer work abroad	30 (> 3 months) 15 (6 weeks – 3 months)
	Study or research trip	Trip abroad with international contacts, summer school (duration of 1 week or more)	5
	Summer school Abroad	Attendance at a summer school (duration 5 of 1 week or more)	
Supplementary elements	COIL module	Whether this may count or not towards the award of the certificate depends on the intensity and duration of the effective inter-cultural immersion in a COIL interaction form. The syllabus of such a module is to be submitted for approval to the IRO (CGC coordination group) and entered in the activities list.	15
	Extra-curricular intercultural engagement	Up to 15 portfolio points may be awarded for additional student activities with clearly demonstrable intercultural interaction. Engagement with or without remuneration, as a buddy for incoming exchange students, ESN/AIESEC/IAESTE, looking after refugees, integration work in migration, etc	15

Table 8: CGC Activities and Engagement elements

The Language pillar of the portfolio targets the promotion of multilingualism. Students will have or acquire the ability to adequately speak a range of languages at a certain level and engage in the related professional discourse. In the case of this portfolio element, cf. Table 9 below the objective is to verify the ability to communicate successfully in a foreign language. A form of verification of this must be provided on submission of the portfolio. If the form of verification is more than 5 years old, it must be credibly demonstrated that the language in question has continued to be used actively at an appropriate level and linguistic skills have been improved.

	Element	Description	Portfolio points
Extra- and Intra-curricular	Language portfolio 'first language + three'	At least Level C1 skills in a foreign language (verification required) and working knowledge of at least two other foreign languages (self declaration)	20
	Language portfolio 'first language + two'	At least Level B2 skills in two foreign languages (verification required)	20

Table 9: CGC Language elements

The ability to explain their own cultural value system in a situation where there is intercultural conflict, and therefore being able to understand and empathise with the perspective of everyone involved, is a key aspect of being able to deal with others appropriately and successfully. This aspect is a key criterion for the assessment of the Personal Reflection Report (Table 10), which is the final part of the portfolio.

Element	Description	Portfolio points
Personal Reflection Report	Students are to write a Personal Reflection Report on one or more critical intercultural events that occurred in the time between the start of the first CGC-related activity and the end of their three or four-year degree programme. Guidelines for writing the report and sample assessments can be found in the concept Appendix. A Personal Reflection Report written as part of a curriculum unit may also be credited provided it is not credited towards in any other portfolio element.	20

Table 10: CGC Reflective Report

6.1.1 Developing Content for the CGC

Since not all departments offered intercultural competence modules, in April 2014, the UEB approved the development of two BFH modules on intercultural and trans-cultural topics to ensure that the Knowledge points of the CGC Portfolio could be attained: a summer school in the fall semester and a semester module in the spring semester (each worth 2 ECTS credits)

It was therefore decided in March 2015 that two modules would be developed and financed partially internally, charged to the department in which the participating student is enrolled as a regular or as an incoming student. Departments that only credit CGC portfolio points for participation in one of the modules, but not the ECTS credits, could internally clarify whether they would still finance the students' participation or whether the students must finance it themselves as externals.

Requirements and Execution

Students who wish to acquire the CGC must be enrolled in a bachelor's or master's degree programme at BFH or be on an exchange semester/year of a bachelor's or master's degree programme at BFH. Students completing further education courses (CAS, DAS, MAS) are not entitled to obtain the CGC. Guest students who demonstrate that they have completed all the portfolio elements during their time at BFH will be entitled to the CGC. It will be issued to them by BFH when they graduate from their home university. The content and formal requirements for extracurricular written proofs of competence (Personal Reflection Report and written assignments that do not form part of a standard degree programme) will be specified in a portfolio catalogue or in additional guidelines. Written proofs of competence will be assessed by a lecturer and awarded a grade of 'pass' or 'fail'. There will only be one opportunity to retake or improve extracurricular written proofs of competence that are failed. Extracurricular activities will be credited if they meet the requirements specified in the portfolio catalogue. It must be possible to provide clear verification of completion of the activity, for example, by nominating a referee or providing the relevant written confirmation.

The CGC coordination group organised by the Global Engagement Office is responsible for quality assurance, the exchange of experiences (annual meeting) and further developing the supplementary certificate. Any questions that arise during activities will be addressed with the coordination group.

Departments are tasked with defining in a portfolio catalogue the specific 'portfolio elements' through which students are able to acquire portfolio points. The benchmarks outlined in the official CGC Concept are to be regarded as minimum requirements.

6.1.2 Implications

There are numerous challenges and implications stemming from various levels of implementation of the CGC.

Challenges related to the objectives and standardised concept

There has been no systematic evaluation conducted to assess the extent to which intercultural and cross-cultural topics are integrated into course modules across the departments.

While certain degree programmes, notably in the Business School, have consistently prioritised the strategic development of comprehensive global competence, there is a need for a comprehensive institution-wide assessment to ensure a cohesive and aligned approach across all departments.

The title of the certificate "global" competence primarily addresses the facets of intercultural and international dimensions. However, the inclusion of the global dimension and its alignment with the graduate attributes outlined in Section 3 may require further clarification and emphasis to ensure consistency and coherence.

Departments such as the Bern University of the Arts have not provided students with a portfolio checklist, citing the intention to develop one when interest arises, and staff resources are dedicated to the promotion thereof. This lack of promotion and awareness may hinder student engagement with the certificate and limit its impact on fostering global competence.

Broader offering of knowledge acquisition

Curricula reform both at the rectorate and departmental levels has expanded students' choices in modules aimed at developing their intercultural and global competences. The BFH Diagonal platform facilitates inter-departmental and interdisciplinary collaboration, offering additional opportunities for students. However, as mentioned in point 1, there is a need for better alignment between these initiatives and the development of key competences and graduate attributes.

Low attractivity

Despite concerted efforts in promoting the certificate by the Global Engagement Office and individual departments, the total number of certificates issued between 2015 and 2022 remains low, totalling only 201. The Business School has issued the highest number, with 107 awarded, followed by Social Work with 61 certificates. However, the Bern University of the Arts has not issued any certificates during this period (see Figure 4 below).

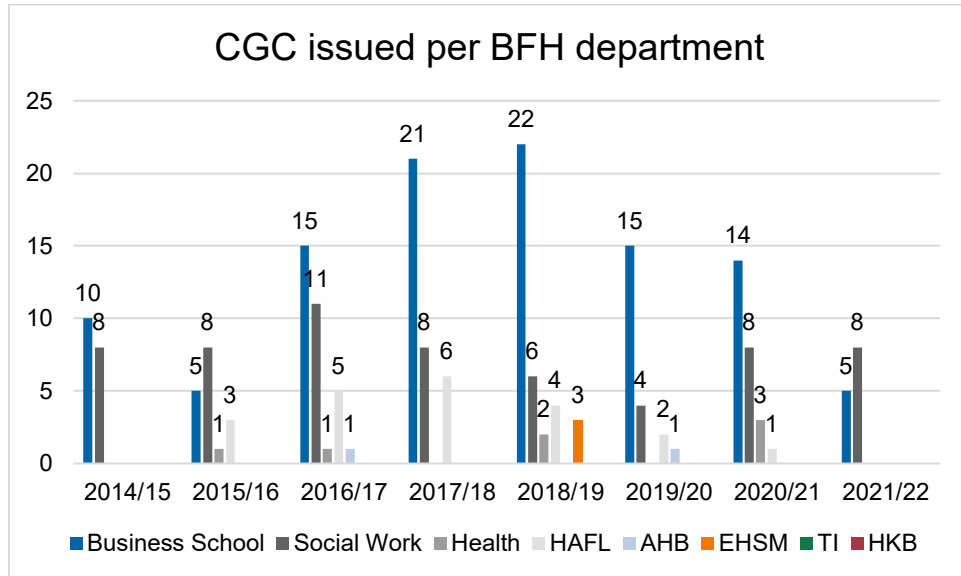


Figure 4: Number of CGCs issued per BFH department between 2015 and 2022

Looking at the Business School as an example, the promotion process of the CGC begins at degree programme information events, followed by the open-days events, new-student orientation, study abroad information events, study abroad interviews, courses such as at Intercultural Communication & Competence Development (ICCO) and finally targeted newsletters. However, despite these efforts, completion rates remain a challenge.

As depicted in Figure 5 below, on average, 50% of the students who sign up for the certificate fail to complete all portfolio elements. The primary barrier appears to be the completion of the final reflective report, as students typically find the knowledge section is easily attained through mandatory curricula modules offered in their respective degree programme. Similarly, providing proof of language competence and international exposure generally does not pose significant issues.

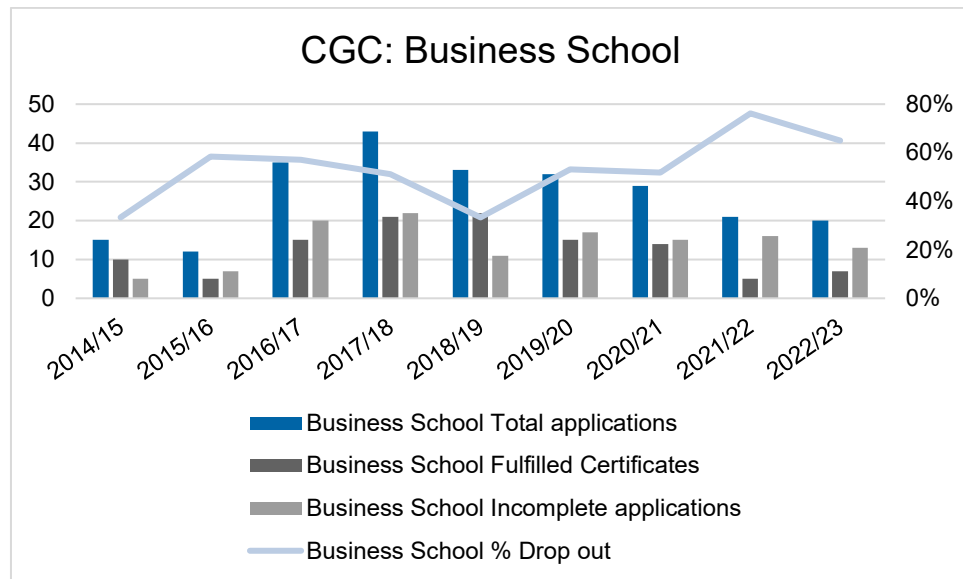


Figure 5: CGC Dropout rate at BFH Business School between 2015 and 2022

Monitoring & quality measures

The CGC governing body is yet to define quality measures and monitoring procedures. Since the revision of the CGC Concept and RCGC in 2020, benchmarking for the reflection part has not occurred. This lack of benchmarking means that there are no checks and balances in place to ensure that points are allocated consistently for activities such as summer/winter schools and language acquisition.

Potential of Virtual Exchange

During the COVID-19 pandemic (2020 – 2021), several outgoing exchange students from the BFH Business School chose to complete their semesters abroad virtually. However, Virtual Exchange (VE), was and still is not formally defined in the RCGC and thus requires a sur-dossier approach. Furthermore, the International Relations Committee decided that students would receive their activity points for VE if they have completed an Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) assessment. This would need to be developed further as an IDI assessment in this context requires guided intercultural learning. Additionally, considering the push for more equitable and ecological international exposure (see chpt 3.1 & 3.2) it is worth investigating the potential of VE elements in curricula.

7 Potential and challenges

This report aimed to explore key considerations for the development of an overarching Certificate of Global Competence across a consortium of four Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Switzerland. It began with a broad examination of competence modelling, delving into the concepts of intercultural and global competence, and concluded with a discussion of graduate attributes (i.e. competences). [Section 3](#) outlined 11 graduate attributes representing different facets of competence, essential for the certificate's further development. In [section 4](#), the report briefly outlined the rationales behind the development of global competences in (Swiss) HEIs, contextualizing the discussion within the framework of employability, a primary mandate of Swiss universities of applied sciences. [Sections 5](#) and [6](#) provided detailed analyses of two Certificate of Global Competence programs within the consortium: the Certificate of International Profile framework at ZHAW and the Certificate of Global Competence at BFH. These analyses yielded recommendations and raised pertinent questions for the future development of a unified certificate program framework. The report revealed various considerations crucial to further developing a global certificate framework, as summarised below:

1. A comprehensive and ambitious list of graduate attributes can be derived from existing literature, offering a foundational framework for global competence training.
2. There is a discrepancy between the literature regarding global competences development and reality on the ground in Switzerland: While attempts have been made at offering students a meaningful way to engage in global development, these attempts tend to lack conceptual unity and coherence. They often end at the point where they can motivate students to see the benefit of the international and intercultural dimensions, however, they rarely go beyond this initial stage in a systematic way. This raises the question whether a comprehensive certificate programme grounded in scientific insight can be implemented at all.
3. The two certificate programmes analysed show different approaches to the implementation of global competences in the respective universities. ZHAW pursues a soft course by providing rough guidelines to its schools that leave maximum room for implementation. This flexibility leads to diversity but also adds to incoherence and lack of unity in terms of practices, assessment, administration and visibility of the product. BFH pursues a more centralised approach and, as a result, presents more unity and coherence at the surface level. However, it is important to note that the size disparity between the two universities – ZHAW being several times larger than BFH – may influence the feasibility and effectiveness of their respective approaches.
4. In both universities, little attention is paid to assessment of study outcome or measurement of actual attainment of attributes. Both universities primarily define the programme through what students need to do or bring (entry requirements, tasks / activities) rather than through graduate attributes (who they

should be). This is problematic as it emphasises structure and process over quality.

5. While entry requirements are highlighted by students and programme coordinators as presenting a serious barrier for joining the programme in ZHAW (especially language requirements), the BFH Business School does not report similar issues but emphasises issues students have with writing reflective reports. The differences between ZHAW and BFH may also be due to the different disciplines involved: At ZHAW, the business school is notably absent from the programme and, therefore, from the analysis.
6. Both universities report a high dropout and low completion rate, while not being academically very demanding or time-consuming. In BFH, completion rates are unevenly distributed, with the Business School having awarded by far the most certificates to date. This finding is at odds with the expectations of the schools. This shows that the current certificate programmes do fully not address student needs, that the programmes are not sufficiently supported by the schools / universities, or that the schools / universities take measures to promote the programmes that do not lead to the desired effect. It is likely that these factors interact in complex ways.
7. The report concludes with a list of questions for further consideration. These questions summarise controversial points related to currently implemented certificates, which have been derived from the case studies. The answers to these questions are of key importance for curricular development and will define the shape of the proposed global competence certificate.
8. The questions raised in the report underscore the wide array of opinions and practices within Swiss HEIs regarding global competence certificates, without substantial evidence or rationales to support them. Moreover, they emphasize the necessity of considering disciplinary differences and overcoming hierarchical barriers in order to develop a cohesive and effective framework for global competence certification.

Tables and figures

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