

# The EUTOPIA Certificate of Internationalisation (EUCI)

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# Cover letter

My name is Marina Molowny Trenchs, and I am a university student. I am in the fourth year of my Political Science and Administration degree at Pompeu Fabra University in Barcelona. During my academic career, I have had several work experiences:

- ❖ Worker at Tecnocasa Group in Barcelona (Spain)
- ❖ Intern student at the United Nations Organization in New York (USA)
- ❖ Intern student at 22@NetworkBcn in Barcelona (Spain)

The following portfolio is a series of three essays:

1. Essay 1: My family
2. Essay 2: Internship in the United Nations Headquarters in New York
3. Essay 3: High School Research Project

These essays explain three activities I have carried out, which consider the following learning outcomes.

## Reflective Learning Outcome

In its basic form, reflective practice is just thinking or reflecting on your work. It relates to creating lessons from experience, reflecting on what was done and what transpired, and deciding what to do differently next time. However, reflective practice differs from everyday thinking as it requires effort to reflect on experiences and gain information and knowledge about them. Therefore, it can be a more important tool for personal, and professional development and improvement than formal learning. A person who reflects throughout their course is not only recalling past actions and events but is consciously observing emotions, experiences, actions, and responses and uses that information to add to their existing knowledge base and reach a higher level of understanding. When I ended my high school research project, “Elementary school students’ participation and motivation in CLIL and non-CLIL based classrooms” and received two significant prizes, one from the Government of Catalonia and the other one from the Association of Professors and Professors of English of Catalonia (APAC) confidence, experience, and knowledge increased.

## Intercultural Learning Outcome

Intercultural skills refer to understanding and adapting to different cultural situations and perspectives. Also, interculturality involves being receptive to foreign languages and open to different perspectives. Because of my UN internship, I now have a thorough understanding of a wide range of intercultural situations and experience viewing the world through the eyes of others. For this UN work experience, I lived in New York and stayed at "International House," a private, independent, non-profit residency where I have been able to meet people from all over the world. These have provided me with specific skills such as listening, observing, critical thinking, and attitudes such as respect, openness, and curiosity to learn, among others. Moreover, in the first school I observed in my high school research project, I was in contact with children from different families with very different backgrounds and cultures; they all had one thing in common: English. The connection with other cultures helped me create awareness, learn how different cultural backgrounds relate to each other in the school environment, and comprehend and adapt to different cultural situations and perspectives.

## Intersectoral Learning Outcome

Intersectoral approaches can be collaborative, involving several ministries, government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and other groups with a common objective to address a particular problem. I achieved this learning outcome in two of my activities. In the first place, during my internship at the United Nations. As I explain further in this portfolio, the United Nations Organization with 193 member states, other agencies, and non-member governments meet to discuss and resolve issues related to human rights, and economic and social development, among others. In the second place, in my high school research project where I interviewed three professionals from the educational field (university, high school, and elementary school). Although the scope of my project was academic, I was able to have contact with international university faculty, so I was in contact with different disciplines in the educational field.

## Challenge-based Learning Outcome

All my life, I had to face learning while solving real-world challenges. I have always asked questions, researched, and tried to solve challenges from which I could gain knowledge. While living in New York, my level of English improved dramatically. The language immersion helped me to perfect my accent and fluency. In addition, I have been immersed in a multicultural environment, which has made me understand and comprehend other perspectives on current affairs.

Finally, some challenges I had to face were the following. In the first place, time management. I had to learn how to organize, plan and divide my time between different activities to achieve the various objectives I set. I had to manage my time to be able to work full-time and, at the same time, do the university subjects that I had to do. In the second place, social challenges and socializing. Arriving in New York, I felt alone and had to work on my emotional intelligence to get out of trouble on my own. In addition, I had to make an effort to make friends in an international and new environment, with a different language than the one I was used to. Then, long-distance relationships. Not only for my partner, I had to maintain relationships of friendship, love, and family at a very long distance and six hours apart. From my point of view, maintaining long-distance relationships can be very hard since all problems are magnified by being away from others. Finally, the COVID-19 pandemic. When I arrived in New York, we were in the wave of infections of the Covid-19 variant, Omicron. Days before my flight, we still did not know the restrictions or if we could fly. It was a challenging moment of uncertainty since, in the city, there were many restrictions on movement and meetings.

#### Internationalisation

From my point of view, internationalization refers to any activity that brings people from different cultures and countries together. It can be achieved in various ways, such as studying abroad, using academic programs from other countries, and interacting with international students, among other activities. These activities create an environment that supports intercultural understanding and respect abroad, beyond our borders.

# Essay 1: My family

I have been raised from a multicultural and international perspective since childhood. My parents studied abroad and have always tried to share with me everything they learned from that experience.

On the one hand, my mother was born in Barcelona, Spain. She studied a bachelor's degree in English Philology at the University of Barcelona and did her master's and doctoral studies at Teachers College-Columbia University in New York (USA). As part of her research work, she has published scientific articles in international journals. She has a research project investigating linguistic and intercultural issues in university classrooms with international students. She also belongs to a network of international researchers dedicated to studying university students' stays abroad. As part of her teaching work, she teaches the course "Intercultural Spaces, Languages and Identities" to both local and international students of Pompeu Fabra University.



On the other hand, my father was born in Tenerife, Canary Islands, Spain. He is a research technician at CREAM, located at the Autonomous University of Barcelona campus (Spain). He graduated in Physics from the University of La Laguna (Spain) and obtained his PhD in Astrophysics at ITA (Norway). He has also been a visiting researcher at the University of Montreal (Canada) and other international universities. As part of his work, he has collaborated with researchers from other countries (e.g., France, Sweden, China, Germany, Netherlands, Canada, USA). Those interactions have always taken place in a very international and multilingual context, which has led him to acquire multicultural communication skills and to be able to speak English, French, and Norwegian. He often gives conferences, seminars, and training courses in English and occasionally in French and Norwegian. He is also fluent in Catalan, a language he learned during his stay in Barcelona, which he uses daily at work.

As you can see, my mother is from Barcelona, and my father is from Tenerife. I have grown up in a multilingual and multicultural environment since I speak Catalan with my mother and Spanish with my father.



In addition, they have always given a lot of importance to me to learn English as much as possible and, since I was a child, I have attended English classes in academies, apart from my regular classes at school.

My parents' international background has always been very present at home. They have always tried to instill in me respect and interest for other cultures and the motivation to travel and see the outside world. As a result, we have traveled to different countries such as Italy, the United Kingdom, France, Switzerland, Germany, Canada, and the United States of America.

# Essay 2: Internship in the United Nations Headquarters in New York



This past September (2021), I started an internship in the Department of Medical Staff Management of the Division of Health Management and Occupational Safety and Health (DHMOSH) of the Department of Operational Support (DOS) of the United Nations Headquarters in New York, USA.

The United Nations Organization (UN from here on) is an international organization founded in 1945 with 193 member states. The UN was created to maintain international peace and security through dialogue between the member states. Countries meet to discuss and resolve issues related to human rights, economic and social development, and the fight against terrorism. The UN consists of: the main offices in New York, Geneva, Nairobi, and Vienna, more than 60 information centers, the regional commissions in Geneva, Santiago, Bangkok, Beirut, and Addis Ababa, as well as field offices around the world. Finally, the six official languages of the UN are Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish.

The Department of Operational Support (DOS) provides operational support to UN Secretariat entities worldwide, including advisory, operational and transactional support services. The Department of Operational Support supports the entire UN Secretariat, located at the UN headquarters in New York, where I interned in person. The Division of Healthcare Management and Occupational Safety and Health (DHMOSH) is inside this department. This Division focuses on occupational health risks and will initiate the collection of information on injuries or illnesses incurred on the job and also manages medical leave, disability, medical clearances, medical evacuations and repatriations, and public health emergency preparedness, including medical aspects of crisis response plans and mass casualties at duty stations.

The specific section in which I interned is called Medical Workforce Management, which deals with the strategic planning of the medical workforce, as well as the updating and upgrading of the professional competencies of the medical staff to have adequately trained medical personnel at all duty stations around the world. The Medical Workforce Management pillar is responsible for the strategic planning of the medical workforce and the updates and improvements of the professional skills of UN health workers.



One of my accomplishments during my internship included assisting UNHQ and field duty stations with the development of health-related SOPs, strategies, and guidelines used by DHMOSH. These strategies and approaches support Continuing Medical Education (CME) training courses offered to medical and administrative employees globally. The courses include IT tasks such as preparing and analyzing health-related data from online surveys and statistical and epidemiological reviews of DHMOSH data sets to track recent health policy developments that are important to the DHMOSH workplan.

Some of the work the work I did in my UN internship included activities such as: investigate the style and type of research tools and the formatting of questions most often used by clinical staff, work with a team of physicians and mental health professionals to design research questions for UN clinical staff, develop, format, and distribute surveys, use analysis tools to identify key problem areas, use Excel to create a visualization of the compiled survey data, preparation of survey data summaries for reports in the medical field around the world, generation and deployment of qualified medical care providers meeting profesional qualifications and experience requirements, provision of quality medical care for UN personnel that meet standards acceptable to the UN, help with the certification procedure, elaboration of technical Clearance Reports, help to evaluate medical personnel credentials and technical skill sets to meet the support demand in the field, research of health data for personnel in relevant areas and peacekeeping missions for all UN agencies and contact with their chiefs to let them know the information, used Excel to compile data and create visual representations of the data, used academic databases and sources to help build the regions' historical, political, and cultural contexts, research about Covid related topics to help medical personnel in the field, among others.

As I am studying a degree in Political Science, the knowledge acquired in the development of the assigned tasks that is related to my bachelor's degree has been: to apply theoretical and analytical understanding of international relations, to use argumentation and public speaking techniques, to identify the main actors in the political system, examine their interactions and evaluate their behavior, to understand the structure and functioning of political systems and public institutions and understand the main theoretical formulations, to interpret historical political and social frameworks, to describe and understand the functioning of public administrations, to analyze public policies, to understand citizen behavior and democratic values, to identify the functioning of electoral processes, to understand the structure and functioning of the European Union and the leading institutions and their mechanisms, to differentiate the main theories of political theory and their different fields and subareas, to apply the main ideas of the discipline and its various fields to real practical problems and apply the further theoretical contributions on actors, networks of actors and collective action to practical, actual or simulated and real-life situations, to analyze the behavior of political actors, both individual and collective (parties, interest groups, social movements, etc.) and to apply the different techniques of behavioral analysis and political actors, among others.



The fact of doing the internship abroad in an organization as important as the UN has provided me with very enriching skills such as: (1) intercultural communication and language and cultural awareness, as my team was composed of a variety of nationalities and cultures such as Chinese, German, Latin American, Spanish and North American, (2) courage, (3) self-awareness, (4) adaptability, (5) leadership, (6) teamwork, (7) multidisciplinary thinking, (8) critical thinking, (9) time management, (10) empathy, (11) confidence, (12) problem-solving and sense of responsibility, (13) independence, (14) maturity, among others.

I've participated in various intercultural activities, which have given me a broad understanding of multiple communities' and nations' cultures, organizations and institutions, and history, among other things.

For this UN work experience, I have lived in New York and stayed at "International House," a private, independent, non-profit residency where I have been able to meet people from all over the world. These have provided me with specific skills such as listening, observing, critical thinking, and attitudes such as respect, openness, and curiosity to learn, among others.

Some of the key moments during my stay in New York where I developed intercultural awareness were, for example, the Lunar New Year celebration organized by "International House". There, I saw performances like the traditional lion dance, a "New Year Celebration Dance", a Chinese classical dance, and a display of traditional outfits from different eras of China's history. When the performances ended, we enjoyed snacks and activities from across Asia, including "mahjong" and paper-cutting.

Also, at "International House", I shared a three-bedroom apartment with two more girls from Iran and India. Meeting them helped me get to know other cultures firsthand and have a greater sense of empathy for the world. So often we think that what happens outside our borders is far from our reality, but it is not like that. Knowing them made me understand critical global problems that I was unaware of.

In addition, I expanded my circle of friends, and it provided me with an extensive cultural exchange. They shared their music, food, and customs of their culture with me, and it was an enriching experience. Finally, this has helped me to see my culture from a different perspective, and I have learned to appreciate and value it.

I am privileged to have been able to do so. Even though I was already going with a good level of English, this has improved tremendously. Linguistic immersion has served me to perfect my accent and my fluency. I have been immersed in a multicultural environment, which has made me understand and comprehend other perspectives of today. I've been able to meet people I hope to work with in the future and be able to share our views again. This positive work environment has allowed me to start immersing myself in the world of work in a delightful way.

# Essay 3: High School Research Project

In Catalonia, High School students carry out a final research project in the last academic year (one-year duration). The research project was entitled “Elementary school students’ participation and motivation in CLIL and non-CLIL based classrooms.” (CLIL stands for ‘Content and Language Integrated Learning’.)

Since being very young, I have been surrounded by teachers in different subjects. English has always interested me a lot compared to other topics. Some years after elementary school, my interest in teaching started to grow, and I started exploring teaching degrees and information about them.

Years ago, English was not the primary foreign language in Spain, and it did not have the importance it has today. However, English is a fundamental pillar in education, so there has been a need to change and innovate teaching. The compulsory teaching of languages, especially English, in Elementary education began at the end of the 1970s when English was implemented from 8 years old. Several Spanish Autonomous Communities have increased the number of hours teaching English as a foreign language. They have included, among other things, the teaching of some subjects partly in a foreign language. In the last years, the interest in learning English or any foreign language has increased a lot because it has become a need and the main element of communication between very diverse cultures.

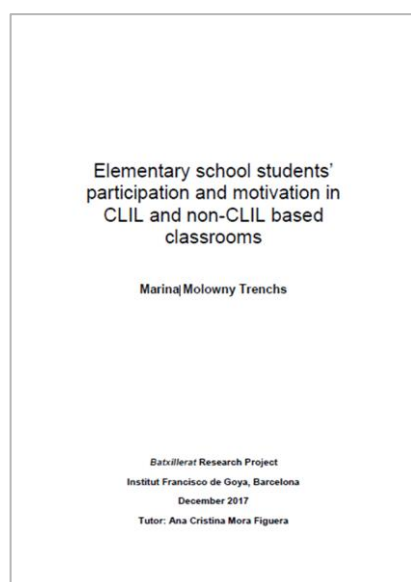
When I was in high school, the teachers started to talk about the research project. I began to think about an exciting topic. There were a lot of ideas in my mind and, after some weeks of thinking about the research project, I decided to focus on the relationship between teaching methodologies in elementary schools and the motivation of students when it comes to learning English. I thought this research project could provide me with many English learning methodologies and help me understand how elementary school classes work.

This research project was a place to reflect on topics from different fields. When deciding on a research topic, I had to read, research and analyze several areas. Researching was new to me as I had never explored different points of view on a particular topic before. In addition to reflecting on academic topics, reflective thinking sparked my interest, curiosity, and motivation to continue learning about topics from other fields.



At the end of this project, I reflected on what I had done, how and what I would extract for myself and improve my future research work. In addition, this work was awarded two significant prizes, “Young Research to promote the scientific spirit of youth (PRJ 2018)” awards from the Government of Catalonia and the first prize of the “John McDowell 2017” awards from the Association of Professors and Professors of English of Catalonia (APAC) which made me gain confidence, experience, and knowledge.

In the practical section of this research project, I interviewed three professionals from the educational field (university, high school, and elementary school). Although the scope of my project was academic, I was able to have contact with international university faculty, so I was in contact with different disciplines in the educational field.



I also had the opportunity to observe two classes from two different schools using two different teaching methodologies. These two schools were located in two very different neighborhoods of Barcelona, characterized by different percentages between the different cultures in the city.

However, in the first school where I was in contact with children from different families with very different backgrounds and cultures, they all had one thing in common, the language, English. Being in connection with other cultures helped me create awareness, learn how different cultural backgrounds relate to each other in the school environment, and comprehend and adapt to different cultural situations and perspectives.

The differences between the CLIL and the non-CLIL classroom were the following. In the first place, in the non-CLIL classroom there were not any writing activities done while in the CLIL classroom the students wrote questions about the project they were doing. These questions were later typed by the same students on the computer. In the second place, in the CLIL classroom the students did a lot of speaking activities but these were not prepared because the students participated in the classroom spontaneously and in the non-CLIL classroom, they commented on a photo of the book and answered some questions from the listening book activity orally. In the second place, in the CLIL classroom the students read the document at the end of the class in silence and in the non-CLIL classroom they read the activities of the book aloud. In the third place, in the CLIL class the students were really participative and a lot of them raised their hand. In the writing activity, the students were really interested in correcting the questions and even in their groups the students talked English to each other while in the non-CLIL class the students weren't really enthusiastic about doing the exercises in the book but when the teacher asked any questions, some of them raised their hand quickly.

In conclusion, in both classes, the students were interested in learning this language but I observed that in the CLIL class students were more participative and used better English and more frequently.

As I was able to study in this project, a successful CLIL lesson should combine the following elements: (1) content and progress in knowledge, (2) communication, (3) cognition and the development of thinking and comprehension skills and (4) culture, as the exposure to alternative perspectives.

Studying the CLIL methodology has allowed me to see that this teaching methodology is characterized by an improvement in the students' communication, interpersonal skills, and cognitive function since bilingual people are more flexible and better able to switch quickly between tasks and tasks in languages. In addition, they have access to other cultures and can explore more travel and work opportunities. Carrying out this research project has helped me to see education from an intercultural and international perspective. As an institution of education and training, the school should promote a vision of respect for diversity, given that we live in a globalized world with rapidly changing societies. The encounter with cultural diversity is increasingly becoming a part of everyday life, and the task of education in the framework of these experiences lies in the teaching of intercultural competencies (of a national, cultural, generic, religious, ethnic, or social nature).

