

# ALGONQUIN COLLEGE

Prepared by International Education Center

## COLLABORATIVE ONLINE INTERNATIONAL LEARNING (COIL)

EDUCATOR HANDBOOK 2026/27



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*This guide is an adaptation of Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) Educator Guide by the Moss Centre for Teaching and Learning, University of Saskatchewan and is used under a [CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/) license.*

*Changes include rewriting some of the passages and adding original material.*

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# 1. Background

Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) is a framework of teaching and learning that promotes intercultural opportunities through a short-term virtual exchange program. Educators partner with an educator from another geographical location to plan a COIL experience within a course. The educators are usually within similar fields of study and work together to develop a collaborative task for students of divergent cultural backgrounds.

At the end of the course, students and faculty reflect on their unique experiences meeting, working, and learning with their peers. COIL is a registered service mark of The State University of New York. From the [SUNY COIL page](#):

“COIL provides a means to:

- Develop intercultural awareness and communicative competencies, cost effectively and at scale
- Encourage appreciation for diverse backgrounds and perspectives
- Broaden and strengthen students’ understanding of the discipline studied through applied projects and discussions
- Advance the use of technology tools for collaboration, communication and learning
- Prepare students to work in a multi-cultural and connected world.”

COIL is intended to be integrated as a part of regular coursework, so there should be no extra costs for students. It is an alternative to study-abroad programs which are available to fewer students because of the travel expenses, credit transferability etc. Through COIL courses, more students can see and experience global learning through a world-class virtual opportunity.

## Checklist of Tasks for Educators

- Complete the COIL [application form](#) (The form takes about three minutes to complete. You will provide the program name, course name, term and other information about the proposed COIL activity. The application form answers will be delivered to IEC (lead department coordinator).
- Find a COIL partner educator.
- Plan together for student collaboration.
- Have students complete the [Pre-COIL survey](#).
- Do the COIL project.
- Have all students complete the [Post-COIL survey](#).
- Share the [GoGlobal with AC](#) webpage and [Guard Me Study Work Abroad Award](#) information with your students, should they be interested in other international experiences.
- Complete the [Instructor feedback survey](#) at the end of the COIL activity to provide IEC feedback.
- Repeat the partnership next year/term!

## 2. Pre-COIL Phase

Getting started requires evaluating your desired course, any Algonquin College resources available to you for the COIL initiative, choosing a partner to begin collaboration with, and setting up the model course. Each step below has guiding questions you may want to consider before starting preparations.

### Step 1: Evaluating Your Own Course

Consider these questions about your course before introducing it to your partner.

- What qualities of my course make it appropriate for the COIL experience?

- How will I adjust my syllabus to meet the demands/needs/concerns of my partner, considering possible linguistic and/or cultural differences?
- What interactive intercultural activities/approaches might suit this initiative?
- What aspects of my course are suitable for collaborative activities?
- What are my goals for the COIL project?
- What are my specific learning outcomes for the students in this project (beyond a learning outcome about intercultural awareness and communication)?
- How will I assess the students' performance and learning for this course/activity?

## Step 2: Determining Algonquin College Resources

Algonquin College staff members are available to guide you along this journey. It is advised that you are familiar with the platforms and supports available to Algonquin College staff and faculty before you connect with your partner.

- The college uses Teams for video conferencing. You may review [Best Practices for Configuring Meetings in MS Teams \(Standard\) using "Meeting Options"](#).
- IT Support Services are also available through [ITS](#)
- Please refer to the [Education Technology webpage](#) for a collection of the learning technologies available at Algonquin College.

## Step 3: Choosing a COIL Partner

Several factors may affect a successful partnership. To start, you may narrow down your institutions/s of choice by answering these questions:

- What **geographical area/s** are you interested in seeking partnership?
- How will connection with your selected area of interest contribute to the success of your COIL experience? Have you ever worked in or with anyone from your selected area(s) of interest?
- Do you have a school that you want to work with?
- What is the time difference between the institutions, if any?

- Does Algonquin College have an existing partnership with your school/s of choice? Email the [Associate Director, International Operations](#), IEC for a list of existing schools / partnerships.
- Does your selected institution(s) have a course like yours?
- Does it have a COIL program?

If Algonquin College does not have a partnership with the school, the International Education Centre will facilitate a Letter of Intent. Email the [Associate Director, International Operations](#) to initiate a Letter of Intent.

Before you meet with a prospective partner, be prepared to find out about the following during your first meeting:

- Differences in institutional culture and time zones
- Their proposed course option(s)
- Agreement of terms in commitment
- Technological accessibility and semester alignment

## Initial Meetings

Most people need some time to get to know their partner and work through future collaboration details. Fostering a supportive and respectful relationship helps support an initiative meant to give the students a unique cross-cultural experience based on equal effort, enthusiasm, and dedication.

To help you to determine your final decision for partnership, the following table could be used as a guide to record information.

Contact Information	Algonquin College Instructor	COIL Partner Instructor
Name		
Email Address		
Institution /Faculty/Course Website		
What language(s) are you fluent in?		
Do you belong to any professional organizations/networks? Which one(s)?		
Video Conferencing Platform Info.		
Time Zone		
Best day(s) and time to contact you for planning		
<b>PERSONAL QUESTIONS</b> <i>(in establishing an open line of communication; pick what works for you)</i>		
What brought you to teaching?		
How would you describe your teaching style?		
What is your university/school's city like? Are you from this area?		
Have you been to Canada? Where?		
Why did you decide to do a COIL course?		
What do you hope will be the biggest takeaway for the students?		

<b>COURSE CONTENT</b>		
Name of suggested course for the COIL initiative and the level of course?		
Language(s) of instruction		
If the language of instruction is not English, what resources might we use for translation?		
Preferred term and specific months for the COIL.?		
Preferred day and time for the COIL?		
What percentage of synchronous vs. asynchronous activities would you like to see?		
Goals you would like to achieve through this collaboration?		
Suggested learning objectives or outcomes for this collaboration?		
What aspects of your syllabus do you think would be ideal for collaborative activities?		
Should we decide what aspects of our syllabi address the COIL collaboration?		
Is there any topic of interest that you would prioritize for intercultural discussions?		
How do you usually assess your students? How often do you assess?		
Would you like us to develop a new form of assessment?		
Would you prefer if we used our existing rubrics/checklists interchangeably?		
What will the students be assessed on? (assignments, reflections)		
<b>TECHNOLOGICAL PREFERENCES</b>		
Have you taught many courses online besides online delivery during COVID?		
Does your institution have a Learning Management System (LMS)? If yes, which one/s? Can external students access yours? [Algonquin College doesn't allow outside users to access Brightspace courses.]		
Do the students regularly use your LMS?		

## Support and Assistance

At Algonquin College, the International Education Centre has staff readily available to support you. For new and evolving COIL collaboration, connect with the [Associate Director, International Operations](#).

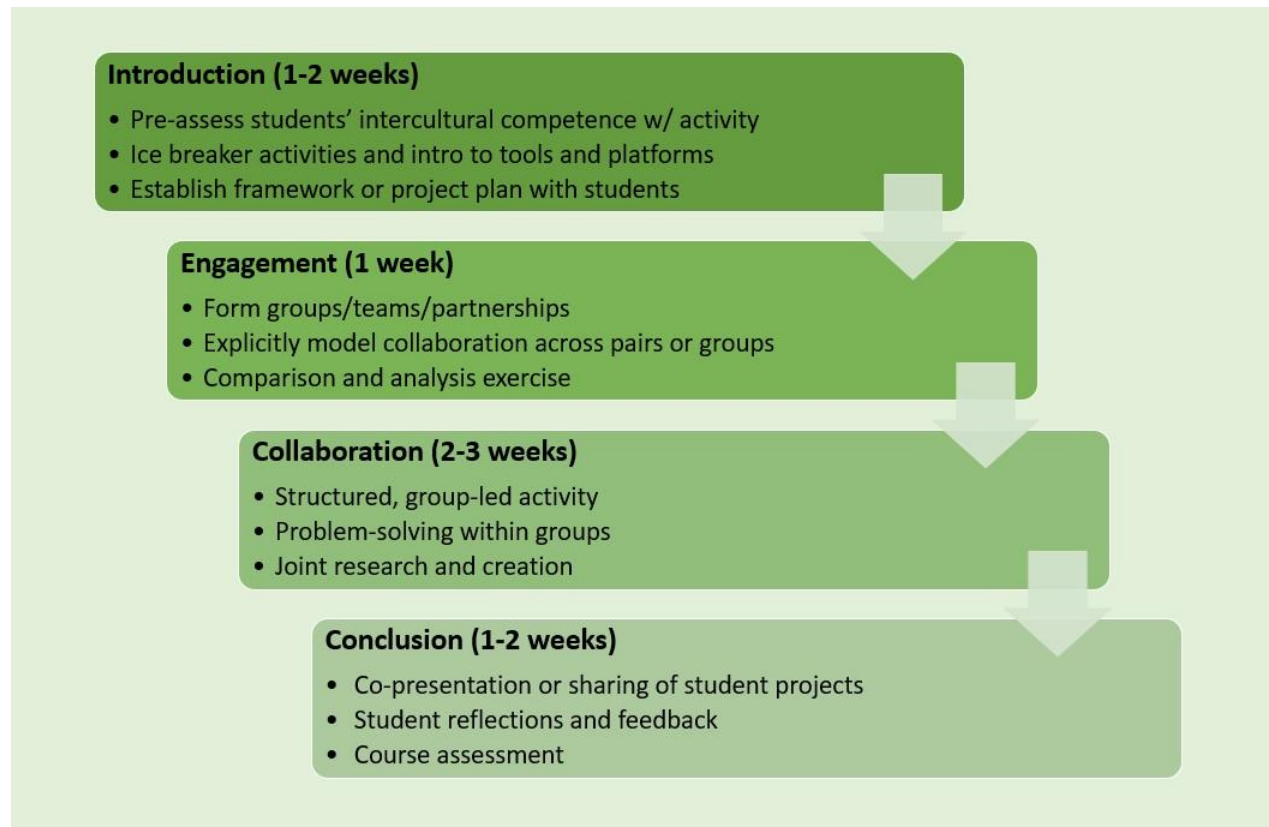
For established COIL partnerships, you must connect with the International Education Centre. The Senior Regional Managers are experts in securing long-term formal partnerships with existing and new partners. For direct assistance, contact with the [Associate Director, International Operations](#).

**Pro-tip:** *After you have decided on your partner, start working on a basic written agreement between you and your partner to maintain a transparent and respectful line of communication. Use the templates included in this document as needed.*

## Developing The Course

Develop a schedule with established timelines for the planning of each aspect of the course. This includes the goals, objectives, and activities for each module within the syllabus. You will also conceptualize your icebreaker, intercultural activities, assignments, assessments, class times, technological tools to be used and other logistical matters. You are also encouraged to let your students participate in a pre- and post-assessment activity to evaluate their level of intercultural competence and preparedness to work in an intercultural setting.

## Example Project Structure



## 3. COIL Privacy and Security Considerations

In many cases, collaborative online international learning (COIL) involves the collection, use and disclosure of student personal information; thoughtful consideration should be given to protect students' privacy throughout their participation and beyond.

### Sharing Student Information

Sharing student information such as an Algonquin College email address and their first/last name with a partner school is likely a routine part of the collaboration process; students should still be told when this is happening. The following phrasing might be helpful. Contact the AC Privacy Office at [privacy@algonquincollege.com](mailto:privacy@algonquincollege.com) for assistance.

*“Personal information such as your name and Algonquin College email address, and relevant project results, may be shared with students, faculty, and staff at the participating*

*educational institution(s) in order to facilitate your participation in collaborative online international learning activities.”*

## **Recording Meetings**

In the event you plan to record and share student collaboration meetings, participants must be notified and advised on the purpose of the recording, and if and where it will be available for viewing. These types of recordings should be retained only as needed to fulfil the purpose of the recording and should be securely deleted at the end of the term. Any advice about recording should be in line with guidance from [Learning and Teaching Services](#).

## **Securely Storing and Sharing Information**

When sending identifiable student information, please use Algonquin College approved file storage such as OneDrive. OneDrive is Microsoft’s cloud storage tool that allows instructors and staff and students to store and share files. All the data stored on the app is protected by encryption and loss management. Your partner university may also have an approved, encrypted tool and this may be sufficient for the purpose of collaboration. Contact IT Support for more help <https://itsupport.Algonquin College.ca/>

## **Use of Student Images**

Taking a photo of a virtual collaboration activity to be used for a limited purpose such as including it in a news article on an Algonquin College website or social media platform is permitted if you provide notice of your intention and obtain verbal consent of the participants.

## **Use of Student Assignments**

For any additional use or disclosure of student assignments, beyond what is reasonable for the purposes of participating in the virtual collaboration activity, students are the copyright owners of their work, and as such instructors should have written consent to use/reproduce/etc. student work.

*This “COIL Privacy and Security Considerations” section has been adapted by the Gwenna Moss Centre for Teaching and Learning with permission from a similar resource developed by Seneca College of Applied Arts and Technology’s Privacy Office.*

## 4. COIL Teaching Strategies

Don’t forget to ask students to complete the [Pre-COIL survey](#).

COIL requires inclusive and culturally responsive teaching to encourage student engagement. [Learning and Teaching Services](#) offers numerous training opportunities for faculty and staff to learn and renew skills that will enable us to take the right approach to work with persons outside of our cultural groups. Visit the [Intercultural Teaching Resources webpage](#) for more resources. There is also a plethora of resources that covers inclusive teaching practices that may be found via the linked documents and webpages below:

- [FIU Online Global Learning](#)
- [York University- Open Pedagogy as a Creative Process](#)
- [York University- Developing and Implementing Interculturality](#)
- [Building Community Remotely](#)
- [Critical Practices for Anti-bias Education Classroom Culture](#)

**Pro-tip:** After you have completed your course design with your partner, ensure that you do a test run of the technological resources: Make sure:

- Students will have access to the LMS or chosen platform (re-check log-in information)
- Video and audio of the chosen technology are in good working order
- Resources and support contact information are up to date

## 5. Reflection

Reflective activities are used to assess the effectiveness of the course. They can be administered both at the start and end of the COIL experience. Students should be allowed to provide feedback on the collaborative activities and assess if the overall experience has met or even exceeded their expectations. You and your partner should also be involved in

this process, share with the students your experiences planning the course, whether you accomplished your goals and how you hope to make improvements in the future.

FIU has examples of how the students may complete their reflective activities: [Reflection Activities, FIU](#).

## During the COIL Experience

- After all your planning efforts, your students will meet their international instructor and classmates. They will then participate in **icebreaker activities** to get to know each other. Some icebreaker examples are below.
- They will be given opportunities to collaborate via web-based tools with each other to complete designated assignments.
- The students will also complete a mid-experience assessment or discussion to reflect on their experiences thus far.

## Icebreakers

At the beginning of your course, use these fun social activities to get students to know each other. Some introductory ideas to use in small groups (4 -10 students):

- Pick an animal and describe how they relate to that animal
- Share if they prefer coffee or tea, water or land, or other this/that questions.
- State two truths and one lie about themselves and have others in the team guess which statement is the lie.
- Find an object that represents your life right now. Share what it means with the group.

**Florida International University** more detailed examples [in Icebreaker Activities, FIU](#).

## Post-COIL Experience

- Ensure that your students get the opportunity to reflect on their experience working across differences at the end of the course (cultural, social, regional, gendered, sexual, and other) and how their perspectives and worldviews were questioned and reframed. Ask the students to complete the [Post-COIL survey](#).
- You and your partner will also complete a post-experience debrief

conversation and reflect on the impact. Don't forget to complete the [Instructor feedback survey](#) at the end of the COIL activity to provide IEC feedback.

- Will you try this COIL partnership again?

## **Additional Resources**

- [Handbook with helpful checklists for instructors](#) from State University of New York
- [Workbook to guide conversations with teaching partners](#) from University of Minnesota
- [Virtual Exchange Resources for Faculty](#) from University of Guelph