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Mentoring in collaboration. Co-constructing music education competencies in school internships abroad

Malmberg, Isolde [Hrsg.]; Buchborn, Thade [Hrsg.]; Steinmetz, Lauren [Hrsg.]: Future-making, mobility and networking. Rum / Innsbruck : HELBLING 2026, S. 109-127. - (European perspectives on music education; 17)

Quellenangabe/ Reference:
Malmberg, Isolde; Triantafyllaki, Angeliki; Dimitrakoulakos, Demosthenes: Mentoring in collaboration. Co-constructing music education competencies in school internships abroad - In: Malmberg, Isolde [Hrsg.]; Buchborn, Thade [Hrsg.]; Steinmetz, Lauren [Hrsg.]: Future-making, mobility and networking. Rum / Innsbruck : HELBLING 2026, S. 109-127 - URN: urn:nbn:de:0111-pedocs-368015 - DOI: 10.25656/01:36801

https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0111-pedocs-368015
https://doi.org/10.25656/01:36801

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Isolde Malmberg, Angeliki Triantafyllaki &
Demosthenes Dimitrakoulakos

Mentoring in Collaboration

Co-constructing Music Education Competencies in School Internships Abroad

Abstract

This article examines how mentoring practices in School Internships Abroad (SIAs) for music education students are shifting from traditional, hierarchical models toward collaborative and co-constructive forms of professional learning. Drawing on findings from the *Erasmus+* project *TEAM – Teacher Education Academy for Music*, we analyse seven design-based research cycles involving student teachers, mentor teachers, and teacher educators across several international placements. Qualitative data from orientation meetings, in-situ voice memos of student teachers, and post-internship interviews reveal that SIAs create immersive, highly participatory learning environments in which STs engage deeply with school life, take on collegial roles, and stimulate intercultural reflection among staff. Differences between educational contexts often foster reciprocal mentoring, while increased time on site promotes shared inquiry and collaborative teaching practices. Based on these insights, we outline key characteristics of effective mentoring in SIAs and present a practical *Mentor Teacher Checklist* to support co-constructive learning in international music education internships.

Keywords: School internship abroad, music teacher education, mentoring, collaboration, co-construction

Introduction

Europe is growing ever closer together, due not least to our increased mobility (Delhey, 2022). Young people in particular use the independence afforded them during their studies to spend time learning or working in another European country. In this text, we take a closer look at a particular form of learning and working internationally: teaching internships that music education students complete in a school abroad – either during or after the completion of their studies in their home country. Our findings are based on the experiences and research results from the large-scale *Erasmus+* co-funded project *TEAM – Teacher Education Academy for Music: Future-Making, Mobility and Networking in Europe*.[1] Within the *TEAM* project, we formed the work package *School Internships Abroad and Mentoring*, focusing on increasing the mobility of music education students by enabling them to complete school internships abroad (SIAs) as well as to receive support through high-quality mentoring. Mentoring – the induction of student music teachers (STs) into school by an experienced music teacher – is considered one of the key factors in achieving sustainable learning gains during school internships (Hascher & Kittinger, 2014; Malmberg, 2023).

In this chapter we will show that mentoring is increasingly perceived less as a top-down activity, with an experienced mentor teacher (MT) instructing a novice teacher, than as a participatory activity in which learning gains are co-constructed, a tendency highlighted both in recent literature and in our data. This may be particularly true for school internships abroad, where collaboration between two people with very different backgrounds takes place; such a model of co-construction could be implemented as a deliberate strategy in the future. In this text, we first review existing literature on mentoring, including existing findings on SIAs. We then provide insights into our research methodology, followed by a presentation of relevant data on mentoring in SIAs. We conclude our text with insights into a practical tool arising from this research investigation and collaborative work – the *Mentor Checklist* – and provide an outlook on the emerging school-university network *TEAM-IN*, which is intended to enable universities, music students and schools to jointly benefit from the possibility of SIAs in the future.

[1] *TEAM*, the *Teacher Education Academy for Future-Making, Mobility and Networking in Europe* aims to provide mappings of European music educational systems, foster mobility (*Erasmus* semesters as well as Internships Abroad), and offer future-making OERs and a set of European-wide Learning Outcomes for Music Teacher Education. https://teacher-academy-music.eu/
TEAM is funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

Mentoring in School Internships

This section presents some of the literature on mentoring in school internships drawing on both generalist education and music education literature specifically. It aims to portray the mentoring roles that schoolteachers take on and refers, in particular, to questions of collaboration and cooperation.

Roles and Responsibilities of Mentors

What is the role and what are the responsibilities of mentor teachers during school internships? Wittek et al. distinguish three forms of mentoring: professional, personal, and social support (Wittek et al., 2017). The Swiss educationalist Alois Niggli draws a very similar distinctions. He structures the mentoring process in his *Standard-Based 3-Level Mentoring in Teacher Education* (Niggli, 2003; 2005) into three content areas, all of which should be present in mentoring, but which differ in objective and conversation style: (1) optimising skills, (2) differentiating professional background knowledge (including subject-specific knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge), and (3) clarifying self-knowledge. Research on mentoring dialogues describes the ways in which MTs fulfil the roles of model, facilitator, evaluator and co-musician, and also how classroom and ensemble activities influence these roles (Munroe, 2021).

Yet, the approach to mentoring appears far from standardised. Despite these classifications, mentors' understanding of their role varies considerably. One important reason for the lack of consistent understanding – as well as a lack of comprehensive descriptions and research findings on mentoring – is that the length, content and requirements, and the timing of mentoring placements within teacher training vary considerably between institutions (Reintjes et al., 2018) and countries (Kuhn et al., 2024). Furthermore, the structure of the mentoring relationship also differs: specifically, whether it involves primarily the mentor teacher (MT) and student teacher (ST) dyad, or whether a university-based subject specialist – a teacher educator (TE) – is equally involved, possibly acting as a mentor on behalf of the university. When universities co-construct student internship formats together with schools/mentors and the student teacher in a triad, collaboration and relationships can be enhanced and reflective dialogue deepened (Hagen, 2022). Another factor that makes mentoring a difficult field to research is that there are few training programmes or professional learning groups for mentors. At least in German-speaking countries, systematic training for mentors only began in the past ten years – nevertheless, many teachers continue to act as mentors in whatever way they believe might be helpful. An examination of existing mentoring programmes, understood here as training formats and mentoring groups which may function as professional learning groups, for example, reveals a tension between the desire to provide individualised support to mentor teachers on the one hand, and the need to uphold increasingly stringent quality standards on the other (e. g., Košinár, 2018, p. 67;

Malmberg, et al., 2018; Dressler et al. 2018; Schnebel, 2018). All these questions already apply to domestic school internships. The limited experience with and research and publications on school internships abroad suggest that the concept of what mentoring can and should achieve is even less clear in an international context. This is where our study comes in.

The Concept of Mentoring Transforms towards Participatory Approaches

Mentoring has consistently been conceptualised through a more traditional lens, which the following quote from Ziegler (2009) exemplifies:

> Mentoring is a relatively stable dyadic relationship over time between an experienced mentor and their less experienced mentee. […] [The mentoring relationship] is characterized by mutual trust and goodwill; its goal is to promote the learning and development as well as the progress of the mentee (Ziegler, 2009, p. 5).[2]

As stated in the introduction, the concept of mentoring in educational and internship settings has been evolving toward more collaborative understandings over the last two decades (Braun et al. 2022). Current mentoring concepts place greater emphasis on learning and development on both sides, known as reciprocal mentoring (Ellis et al. 2020). These approaches also emphasise peer mentoring and co-constructive learning, positioning mentors and mentees as partners in many respects, engaged in shared inquiry and mutual learning. In internship contexts, student teachers are increasingly seen as co-constructors of learning who actively contribute to developing professional knowledge and practice. Through our own literature review, three themes were identified that in recent years have been seen as key to fostering successful teaching internships: (1) partnership ecology: collaboration and dialogue within the triad (ST, MT, TE); (2) mutual support: mentorship models focused on inclusive voices in internships; and (3) culturally responsive and responsible music education: music teaching as a mutual agenda contributing to shaping identity and efficacy.

(1) Partnership Ecology (ST, MT, TE): Reenvisioning the student teaching experience: Dorfmann reports that MTs recommend more alignment between university courses and school practice (Dorfman, 2018). Further research demonstrates that the success of student internships largely depends on the quality and effectiveness of the collaboration within the ST, MT, and TE triad; recent calls for equal partnerships between universities and schools hosting internships can be viewed as a kind of paradigm shift or reconfiguration of the relationship between universities and the school sector (Ellis & McNicholl, 2015). This is particularly evident in cases where cooperation between MT and the university is poor: MTs communicate both commitment and frustration regarding student teaching placements. They appreciate the mentoring process and value giving back to the education system of

[2] Translation by author 1.

the future, but also note disparate levels of communication, little recognition for their work, or unclear expectations from universities (Russell, 2019; Baugh & Conway, 2024). Several studies examine the mixed roles of STs, MTs, and TEs, and the discrepancies between what each stakeholder interprets as good teaching and feedback (Pellegrino, 2015). Together, the triad of STs, MTs, and TEs can form a partnership ecology that necessitates common tools such as observation rubrics, mentoring protocols, frequent two- and three-way communication and explicit role expectations. the development of high self-efficacy in STs is based on gaining positive experiences and receiving constructive feedback from their MTs and TEs, highlighting the importance of differentiated mentoring (Sander, 2020).

(2) Mutual Support: Mentorship Models focused on Inclusive Voices: Sustained confidence, continued musical activity and reciprocal learning for generalist teachers, mentors and students are possible outcomes from engaging and effective student teaching experiences in schools (Barrett & Zhukov, 2024). Student teaching experiences that broaden participation of the respective parties involved (STs, MTs, TEs, students, and other colleagues) can also be transformative. Paired student teaching placements can facilitate peer planning and reflection, although this type of placement may create certain tensions with teaching practices if roles and responsibilities are not co-constructed across the ST-MT-TE triad (Do & Hascher, 2023). Viewing classroom pupils as active participants in ST learning experiences shifts the praxis into a circle of reciprocity, not a hierarchy (Pattison-Meek, 2024). Within the broader theme of mutual support, these studies demonstrate the importance of conceptualising the ST-MT-TE partnership as one which prioritises the creation of an engaging and scaffolded set of learning experiences.

(3) Cultural Responsiveness and Responsibility as a Shared Goal: Culturally responsive education, introduced by Bond (2017), is an educational concept that specifically addresses the fact that our school classes increasingly include children from diverse backgrounds. This concept, with its intercultural foundation, may also include aspects relevant to SIAs. Culturally responsive education comprises five major areas: (a) identity and achievement, (b) equity and excellence, (c) developmental appropriateness, (d) teaching the whole child, and (e) student-teacher relationship (Bond, 2017). A significant body of research asserts that culturally responsive music learning and teaching in internships will better develop through the triadic relationship of ST, MT, and TE. Multiple studies have set forth various principles and frameworks that connect repertoire and pedagogy to learners' identities and communities (Abril, 2013; Palmer et al., 2022; Bennett, 2023). For example, Abril (2013) argued for shifting pedagogical focus from content to learners' socio-musical identities shaped by ethnicity, race, and language; Palmer et al. (2022) proposed a four-quadrant framework – teacher competencies, informed choices, authenticity, and holistic/comparative lessons – offering K-16 teachers actionable methods for inclusive music instruction; and Bennett (2023) identified thirteen facets of culturally responsible teaching, finding that teachers' methods, aims, and beliefs determine the degree to which their pedagogy

is culturally responsive. In non-Western cultures, the role of ethnic identity is important, requiring the triad of ST, MT, and TE to draw on local cultural connections when planning and making decisions about student teaching experiences (Guan et al., 2023). Culturally responsive music learning and teaching can connect well to classroom management: Robison even introduces an extended format for settings in which family partnerships are also involved alongside the ST, MT, and TE triad (Robison, 2020). Questions of repertoire, content, culturally shaped musical practices and the ways in which music education traditions relate to each other naturally arise in a very particular form in a school internship abroad, which is an inherently intercultural encounter.

Mentoring in School Internships Abroad

SIAs have been discussed in generalist teacher education literature since the early 1990s (Major & Santoro, 2016; Mahan & Stachowski, 1990; Pence, 2008; di Pietro, 2022), but knowledge about the special requirements for mentoring in SIAs is still relatively scarce. Some studies point to the element of reciprocity: the further away a school is from the university of the ST (for example in transcontinental SIAs), the more likely it appears that the school will ask from the outset what it stands to gain from the arrangement – an interesting dynamic that may lay the foundation for a reciprocal attitude (Aamaas et al. 2020). Yet, intercultural professional learning communities (PLCs) demonstrate how cross-institutional partnerships (in the case of school internships, university and host school) might co-construct knowledge and negotiate power and context (Timonen, 2021). If the triad of STs, MTs, and TEs is a PLC built upon trust, reciprocity and local responsiveness, there is an improved chance for greater depth of learning; however, this PLC must be designed with intentional practices to be successful. Especially in SIAs, the partnership ecology between ST, MT and TE is even more challenging to achieve than in domestic school placements.

Research Question

The question we seek to answer in this text is therefore: In what ways, and in what moments has the shift towards collaborative learning been evident in our school internships abroad? Furthermore, which aspects facilitate this, and which aspects tend to hinder it? Or, to reformulate the title of our chapter: When and how does mentoring happen in collaboration? How are music teaching competencies co-constructed in SIAs?

Methodology

In this chapter we refer primarily to data and findings on mentoring from the larger research process of *TEAM Work Package 5, School Internships Abroad and Mentoring* (for further details, see Steinmetz et al. (2026, in this volume).

Design-based Research Setting

We employed a design-based research approach (DBR) (Bakker, 2019; Design-Based Research Collective, 2003). DBR combines the systematic, empirically supported development of practical tools on the one hand with contributions to theoretical knowledge in the field through data analysis on the other. McKenney and Reeves (2019) call this the "dual focus" (p. 86), as researchers at the same time are advancing the "maturing intervention" (p. 83) as well as "theoretical understanding" (p. 43).

As is typical of DBR approaches, we worked in iterative cycles. One cycle comprised the planning and preparation, implementation, and post-processing of our design: a school internship abroad for a music education student – meaning that a ST from one country completed a school internship in another country – supported throughout by mentoring tools we developed. Furthermore, the cycles included data collection throughout, as well as data analysis at the end of each cycle in order to inform re-design for the next cycle. Data were collected using instruments we developed (see Steinmetz et al., 2026, in this volume); data analysis served as the basis for evaluation, decisions regarding the re-design, and the acquisition of theoretical knowledge. A total of seven cycles took place. We collected our data using three instruments: transcripts of the (1) orientation meetings between MT and ST entering the internship, which were conducted using our Introductory Conversation guide (Appendix B); (2) voice memo prompts (Appendix D) and the STs' (N = 10) recorded voice memos, made during their placement (between 7 and 20 brief voice recordings per student), and transcripts of (3) a debrief interview after completion of the SIA, which were conducted using our Debrief Interview Guide (Appendix F). In addition, we conducted semi-structured interviews with the MTs (N = 3) towards the end of our study, as well as with the TEs (N = 2) involved.

All data were evaluated qualitatively by building three different coding systems: one system for the seven cycles described above, which includes ST voice memos, introductory conversations with the MT and debrief conversations with the teacher education and research team; one for MT interviews; and one for TE interviews. Each of the three coding systems was used by two members of the research group to independently code the data. The two members met afterwards to discuss discrepancies and collaboratively reach consensus regarding the final codes (Kuckartz & Rädiker, 2019). The data were analysed using qualitative content analysis (Kuckartz, 2019). For this text, we reread the data with a particular focus on the collaborative, dyadic, or triadic design of our SIAs, working with all codes and coded segments from the main categories Mentoring, Mentee Experiences, Teacher Educator, and Mentor-Mentee Dyad, as well as drawing on all memos created both during individual initial coding and in the subsequent exchange between the two co-coders. The findings were incorporated into the revision of the design principles (see below) and into the refinement of our tool (*Mentor Checklist*, see Table 2).

Design Principles: Guidelines between Maturing Design and Growing Theoretical Knowledge

At four points throughout data collection, we supported the refinement of the design as well as the clarification of our theoretical findings through the development of design principles (Euler, 2017). Here, we demonstrate the gradual development of one design principle which illustrates the shift described above. The following design principle has shifted from an open initial question to a more MT-centred formulation, then to one oriented toward the ST's competence, to an explicitly co-constructive version in the end (Table 1). Design principles are used to guide the creation of the practical tools: they "provide guidance and direction, but do not give 'certainties'" (Plomp, 2007, p. 22) and are refined step by step according to data analysis, acting as a link between design development and growing theoretical understanding. The design principles were refined across four points: Before the start of our first cycle we defined design principles based on existing literature, our own mentoring experiences and experience as teachers and teacher educators, as well as a pilot study on domestic school internships throughout Europe (Steinmetz et al., in review). After the second cycle, the design principles were discussed and adapted according to the knowledge acquired to that point; the same occurred upon conclusion of the sixth cycle. At the end of the study a final fine-tuning took place based on the completed data analysis and our joint discussions and interpretations within the research group; we also made decisions regarding their format for their final publication (see APPENDIX A):

Version	Design Principle (DP)	Methodological commentary
Initial version	How and to what extent can students get involved in all levels of school life/*'teachering'*?	We formulated this aspect as a question of the STs perspective, not yet as a principle, using the expression *'teachering'* (= all activities of STs alongside teaching) which had been an in-vivo quote from our pilot survey.
After 2nd cycle	**Play your local strengths** • Raise awareness for your music educational specialities, school culture and National requirements, e. g. technology, choir singing **Teachering as holistic endeavour** • Involve the students in all levels of school life (cf. *'Teachering'*)	Cycle 1 and 2 were carried out in an international school with a MT who is a strong networker, so the DP seemed valuable. At this point, the DP was divided it into two areas, both with more explicit content and foregrounding, the perspective of the MT. We also noted that this could become more problematic in the next cycle with potential language issues in a national school.

After 6th cycle	**Foster developing collaborative working skills in school settings** • Involve STs in collaborative work such as curricular planning, school events, bigger projects, field trips, etc. • Discuss how effective teams work: allow everyone's voice to be heard, listening skills, feedback policy, … • Give insight into faculty peer-learning and collaboration structures between teachers at school.	Due to sufficient data from the students' perspectives and their comments on learning paths, this DP now focuses on the competence development of the STs in its title (collaborative working skills). The core of this DP – the reason why it is central – has become clear, and it has become more differentiated – taking into account the many layers of STs' experiences. The immersiveness of SIAs opened a lot of *'teachering'* possibilities. The foreign language issue continues to be absent.
Final version	**ACT AS A TEAM PLAYER: Develop collaborative learning and working skills in school settings** • Involve student teachers in collaborative work such as school curriculum design, planning school events, projects, field trips, etc. • Discuss how effective teams work: ensuring all voices are heard, developing listening skills, establishing clear feedback policies. • Give insight into faculty peer-learning and collaboration between teachers at your school.	The final version shows how the entire set of DPs has evolved more towards co-constructive learning. The bold title of the design principle is no longer solely attributable to the mentor, but could largely be interpreted from various perspectives (MT, ST, TE, or even school leader). The DP also reflects the common format of the final DPs decided upon by the research group: affirmative opening title, explanatory sentence and further sub-points that describe details of the addressed topic.

Table 1: Gradual development of one design principle

Findings

In the following, we primarily present results relating to aspects of collaboration – the interactions and relationships between participants – or their (joint) learning.

The SIA as an unusual construct with few familiar structures: The often extensive negotiation of conditions that a SIA requires from the outset can strengthen collaborative, but it can also lead to more uncertainty than in familiar and domestic internships. In our SIAs, this departure from familiar structures almost always had a positive impact on collaboration, a fact that we also attribute to the structured introductory discussions (APPENDIX B, Introductory Conversation Guide).

The SIA as an immersive endeavour for STs: An important factor that distinguishes SIAs from domestic internships is the STs' more holistic involvement. SIAs can almost be described as immersive: All ten STs participating in our study spent significantly more time at the school in comparison to what is typical during domestic school internships,

and gradually became more and more involved in school life, sometimes very intensively. This may be because they were abroad and wanted to get as much as possible out of their SIA, and also because there are fewer rigid performance assessments than in their home institution. It may also be due to the lack of a supportive home environment, meaning there is essentially no reason to go home, as one ST describes in a voice memo:

> *'Yeah, and then at the end of this day there was this thing called TGIF. Thank God it's Friday and that's a thing the teachers do at the start of the school year where on Friday they just meet after the last [00:05:12] period and have some drinks, have some snacks. That was really cool. I got to chat with some of the, like, other colleagues I haven't met or met on that day or met before, whatever.* […], *I already got, like, some fear of missing out of, like, the weeks that come after I leave because it's really nice here and I hardly imagined leaving.'* (ST5_VM5, Pos. 6)

Spending more time at school in SIAs positions STs as colleagues: The mere time spent in school seems to have contributed to a more collegial atmosphere, sometimes leading, for example, to extended discussions about teacher beliefs, as one STs describes:

> *'Yes, in the morning we didn't have class, first period, but the teachers of the music department were going to have a meeting to discuss various things and* [MT1] *told us to go and attend. And in the end it was interesting because we discussed what everyone's philosophy is on teaching music. And obviously it was very interesting to see the, while there are only four people, I know, there were all four, let's say, sides, let's say, they all had different opinions on the subject, which is very interesting,* […].*'* (ST5a_VM15, Pos. 6)

In the following situation, this even led to the ST independently deciding to take on upcoming tasks for the music teaching team and to acquire skills that will be useful to them:

> *'And, yeah, then* […] *I unpacked some packages which came and there was some live music production, like, there were some production tools, like, where you can, like, produce music live and I tried that out and I think that was, like, the highlight of my day because I got to experiment with that also and I did it, like, by myself.* […].*'* (ST2_VM5, Pos. 5)

In SIAs the differences can become thought-provoking for all actors: The fact that STs and MTs come from different countries and contexts seems to have promoted openness to different viewpoints and reciprocal mentoring. It can encourage all parties to question what they take for granted. The following MT describes how STs' viewpoints helped her to rethink her own teaching goals:

> *'And it was very nice. It's, it's also,* […] *an enriching experience to see that* [..] *I might have different goals, uh, of music education and, uh, imagine a successful music lesson differently. And it's just as valuable. Uh, so, uh, for, for me, you know, especially in our school where we are so eager to impress most of the time.* […]*, it was for me. It was very, very nice just to step back from that mindset of ours and to look at the music education differently.'* (MT3_DI, Pos. 210)

SIAs as places of intercultural learning for the teaching staff: Another consequence of the strong involvement of STs in school life is that in SIAs, the student teacher seems to belong to the whole school more than in domestic internships. One MT describes how the student teachers' mere presence and the mutual dialogues in the teachers' meeting room prompted him and his colleagues to reflect on similarities, on differences, and on intercultural learning as such.

SIAs empower students in school in terms of language skills: SIAs can also shed new light on students and their abilities. Both mentors from the national schools (where English is not the standard language of instruction) reported how surprised they were by their pupils' ability to navigate the new language situation.

Conversely, SIAs necessitate that MTs require linguistic precision in critical moments: The mentors also reported instances in the classroom in which the STs had formulated tasks that were unclear both linguistically and in terms of content, which significantly reduced the success of the learning sequence for the students.

In SIAs collaborative mentoring support from TEs can foster STs Learning: More examples of collaboration between the ST-MT-TE triad are needed than those found in the *TEAM* project; nevertheless, we refer here to some positive examples of collaborative and supportive assistance additionally provided by university teachers from sending institutions in *TEAM*. The respective TE describes this in their interview:

> *'*[…] *because at some point I talk to them the most, uh,* [… the MT] *put them on a call with me. Um, and we had a very quick conversation, and then he took his laptop and he showed me the students as they were teaching in the next room. Oh, which was great.* […] *Different kinds of communication channels I think.* […] *you know, I, I really kind of encourage them. I say, oh, you know, you look like professionals. You're not, you know, student teachers, you know, like professionals and so forth, you know, and really just providing a lot of encouragement to them.'* (TE2_I, Pos. 31–33)

SIAs foster non- and paraverbal music leading: Finally, we take a look at mentoring in relation to specifically musical activities – music-making in the classroom, for example. Our results show no major differences from the typical role of a mentor as found in domestic internships, such as that of a role model. There is one difference, however, which points anew to reciprocal mentoring: Due to language difficulties present among STs, there is a constant search for ways to of guide music-making either nonverbally or with minimal language use. Increasing the capability to, as one student put it, *'Do*

more, talk less!' (ST3b, 2024) is not only a goal in SIAs, but also a methodological area of exploration for teachers in many countries who teach classes with a large number of migrant children.

Discussion

The findings of this study highlight that school internships abroad (SIAs) in music education constitute a unique pedagogical space in which traditional assumptions about mentoring, teaching, and professional learning are productively unsettled. SIAs are characterised by intensified immersion, unfamiliar structures, and heightened intercultural encounters. These conditions can accelerate the shift from hierarchical mentoring models toward collaborative and reciprocal forms of professional development. In this sense, and in keeping with Timonen (2021), SIAs serve as laboratories for revisiting fundamental questions about the nature of mentoring: Who holds expertise? How is professional knowledge constructed? And what forms of collaborative support encourage student teachers' growth most effectively?

Central to our discussion is the observation that SIAs often dissolve rigid roles. Student teachers were not only learners but also contributors to school life, artistic partners, and catalysts for intercultural reflection among mentors and the wider teaching staff. The mere presence of an ST from a different educational background sometimes triggered school-wide discussions about music teaching, cultural assumptions, and varying approaches to student engagement. This reciprocity – where mentors and colleagues learn from the student teacher – challenges persistent narratives of unidirectional expertise transmission. It also underscores the importance of situating mentoring within dynamic, participatory professional communities rather than within a dyadic expert-novice frame.

Another key finding is the central role of time and immersion in shaping collaborative learning. STs in SIAs spent far more time at school than during typical domestic placements, resulting in deeper involvement in school routines, informal learning moments, and shared responsibilities. This extended presence facilitated a collegial atmosphere in which professional dialogues emerged naturally and spontaneously. At the same time, the immersive character of SIAs brings challenges: mentors must be attentive to emotional strain, potential overextension, and the linguistic demands placed on STs. Clear communication, structured reflection, and scaffolded independence become essential elements of effective mentoring. More than usual, mentors should support STs through difficult situations or setbacks and should be mindful of potential overexposure. One could say that the three support levels (professional, personal, and social support; Wittek et al., 2017) need to be rebalanced. At the same time, MTs can assume that STs in SIAs are generally very open to all kinds of involvement, which can lead to positive and dynamic collaborations.

Our results finally point to the importance of the triadic relationship between ST, MT, and TE. Although SIAs pose logistical challenges for triadic collaboration, even occasional moments of joint communication – such as shared feedback sessions or video-based observations – proved highly supportive for ST learning. Strengthening these triadic structures could further enhance the co-constructive potential of SIAs.

The Practical Tool: *Mentor Teacher Checklist*

Based on the data analysis conducted over seven cycles in our project, we developed the *mentor teacher checklist*, one of the empirically supported practical tools resulting from our DBR approach. The checklist contains twelve guidelines that can help (music) mentors who want to host a student teacher from another country during preparation and implementation of a school internship abroad. In this chapter, this tool serves as a concise and practice-oriented summary of our findings on mentoring music STs in SIAs.

	Practical Guidelines for Mentor Teachers. A Checklist	✓
1	**Lay the groundwork for the internship: Connect and prepare** Take enough time for an introductory conversation in which the MT explains the school context and daily life; the role and content of music lessons; and very specific things (e. g. a typical day, list of instruments, etc.). Take your time to answer all questions and ideas that the ST may have. Clarify and agree on responsibilities and requirements of both the MT and sending institution (TE). Be aware of the ST's learning in an unfamiliar international setting (away from home, typical immersiveness of internships abroad, lack of peer network or personal support system) and think about offering local cultural orientation and support.	
2	**Discuss the why: Music teaching beliefs and philosophies** Share examples of diverse music teaching philosophies. Encourage STs to create and reflect on their general teaching philosophy and values regarding ME, and what their overarching aims and objectives when teaching music are.	
3	**Reflect on different levels: Similarities and differences** Address and discuss ST's experiences regarding the intercultural (school, professional settings, and beyond). Provide reflection tools for intercultural learning experiences like the *intercultural reflection tree*. Explore the role that music plays and how music is taught in a different context.	
4	**Facilitate peer mentoring among STs** Support peer learning among STs through group reflection and facilitate interdisciplinary networking.	

5	**Embrace different forms of musical communication** Encourage STs to take advantage of the SIA to communicate through music and nonverbal means. Keep in mind: Do more, talk less.	
6	**Support adaptation of teaching in a foreign language** Offer teaching materials in English (or the language of instruction that is used) so that songs, further material and subject-specific terms can be used well right from the start. Encourage clear and concise communication during key moments in the lesson (e. g. by written preparation). Language adaptation needs time; trust that the mentee will learn quickly.	
7	**Learn from each other, share learning opportunities (reciprocal mentoring)** Benefit from what the STs can offer from their home institutions (universities and schools), from personal skills or from experiences with different musical styles. Raise awareness for your music educational specialities, school culture and national requirements. From time to time, ask for and benefit from feedback for yourself as MT.	
8	**Progress gradually from observation to independent teaching** Offer observation of your teaching to clarify questions, norms, atmosphere and the ability of pupils. Offer opportunities for 1-to-1, small group, co-teaching, and full-class teaching responsibilities. Facilitate observation of colleagues' teaching as well.	
9	**Provide constructive feedback on and encourage discussion of music-didactic principles** Create space for regular conversation and reflection on teaching via a medium that is best for everyone. When mentees observe your teaching or teach themselves, clarify and explain the patterns behind your teaching actions, as this strengthens teaching practice.	
10	**Feature the student teacher as an artist** Provide opportunities for ST to share and implement their musical/artistic personalities, interests, skills and competences in the school.	
11	**State the importance of and model reflective practice** Demonstrate your own self-reflection methods and tools, highlighting their benefits. Encourage, support and participate in (as needed) ST's self-reflective, self-assessment activities. Support the ST in systematic documentation (e. g., of lesson planning, feedback, personal learning).	
12	**Enable the development of collaborative working skills in the school setting** Involve STs in collaborative work such as curricular planning, school events, larger projects, field trips, etc. Discuss how effective teams work: ensuring all voices are heard, developing listening skills, establishing clear feedback policies. Give insight into faculty peer-learning and collaboration structures between teachers at your school.	

Table 2: The *TEAM* tool *Mentor Teacher Checklist*.

Acknowledgement and Afterlife

In the *TEAM* project, ten young people, three schools, and five universities were given the opportunity to collaborate productively in SIAs. We expressly thank them for their courage, their willingness to break new ground, and for making their data available to us. Their contribution is important for the future of music teacher education. We are currently working towards the school-university network *TEAM-IN*,[3] a partner-finding tool that shall continue to contribute to international mobility and meaningful education of STs even after the *TEAM* project's end.

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[3] https://teacher-academy-music.eu/student-mobility/school-internships-abroad

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APPENDIX I:

WORK PACKAGE 5 SCHOOL INTERNSHIPS ABROAD AND MENTORING

Design Principles for School Internships Abroad & Mentoring

(A) – Internship Formats, Structures & Learning Offers

1	**Clarity is Key** Clarify expectations, framing, and requirements for the school internship abroad (SIA) formally and concretely. • Is the IA mandatory or voluntary, and how does this impact the structure and content of the SIA? • Determine who is sending and who is receiving – who are the partners? • Provide resources and materials to facilitate clarity, such as infosheets and checklists. • Provide written records of requirements and expectations for the SIA, e. g. Learning Agreements.
2	**Inter-Institutional Collaboration** Host and home institutional interaction at all SIA phases (before, during, after). • Specify the contact persons for the collaborating institutions. • Keep a formal record of all communication and specify the means of informal communication (e. g. WhatsApp). • Include the mentor teacher (MT) where possible and/or necessary in the specification of internship content.
3	**Holistic Cultural Engagement Beyond the School** SIAs that provide holistic cultural engagement and immersive experiences offer student teachers (STs) opportunities for intercultural learning, e. g.: • Attending cultural events • Exploring the city • Deepening cultural-historical understanding of the region and host school
4	**Teachering** Engaging in School Life Beyond the Classroom • Provide opportunities for STs to engage with host institution musical and non-musical activities beyond the classroom. • Include STs in faculty-related activities where possible (professional development, staff meetings). • Encourage faculty to engage with the ST where possible.
5	**Embracing Multilinguality in the Music Classroom** • Clarify the language of communication. • Consider music as a means of communication. • Explore means of communication (non- and paraverbal communication, technology-related, etc.).

The OERs listed in Appendices A–G can also be downloaded here: https://oer.mdw.ac.at/oer/collections/3ba78ede-a4b7-4177-9205-d8fd3ea3939b

(B) – Mentoring, Teaching & Teachering Content[2]

1	**Become Visible as Internship School** Provide multiple forms of information. • Provide visual information, website, virtual tour of learning facilities and resources, contacts, school or teacher profile.
2	**Connect and Prepare** Lay the groundwork of the internship abroad with care. • Take enough time for an introductory conversation[2] in which the MT explains the school context and daily life; the role and content of music lessons; curriculum and unit design; desired teaching methods and the balance between instruction and collaborative work; planning and assessing; materials and learning resources …
3	**Clarify and Agree** Establish the responsibilities of the ST, MT, and sending institution. • Meet to discuss expectations and desired learning outcomes (university teacher, MT, and ST) together, if applicable. • Take enough time to answer all questions and ideas that the ST may have.
4	**Create a Supportive Learning Environment** Support the ST's learning in an international setting away from home. • Keep in mind the lack of peer context or personal support system; consider offering local cultural context and connecting the ST to others. • Encourage ongoing dialogue between all stakeholders (in sending and receiving institutions).
5	**Explore Music Teaching Beliefs and Philosophies** Discuss the "why". • Share examples of diverse music teaching philosophies and discuss their potential impact on teacher practice and student learning outcomes. • Encourage STs to create and reflect on their general teaching philosophy and values in Music Education (ME), including overarching aims and objectives.
6	**Encourage Dialogue on (Musical) Links** Reflect upon home and host countries/institutions. • Address and discuss the ST's previous experiences of intercultural contexts (at school, in professional settings, and beyond). • Provide reflection tools for intercultural learning experiences. • Explore the role that music plays and how music is taught in a different context.
7	**Move Gradually** Grow from observation to independent teaching. • Offer observation of your teaching to the ST to clarify questions, norms, atmosphere, and the ability of students. • Offer opportunities for 1–1, small group, co-teaching, and full-class responsibilities. • Offer additional observation of colleagues (musical and non-musical subjects).

[2] https://oer.mdw.ac.at/oer/publication/5cab69ce-b0ee-4fe2-8bd9-a044ccc58ac1

8	**Unlock the Artist** Feature the ST as an artist. • Provide opportunities for the ST to share and implement their musical and artistic personalities, interests, skills, and competences in school.
9	**Share Terminology** Support adaptation of teaching in a foreign language. • Offer teaching material in English (or another shared language of instruction) so that music-related technical terms, songs, and further materials can be used effectively from the start. • Trust that the mentee will learn quickly; language adaptation takes time. • Encourage clear and concise verbal communication in key teaching moments (e. g. when setting a task).
10	**Embrace Non-Verbal Forms of Musical Communication** Do more, talk less. • Encourage STs to take advantage of the SIA to develop communication through music and other non-verbal means. • Facilitate learning processes without relying on verbal instruction.
11	**Model Reflective Practice** Highlight its importance for professional development. • Demonstrate your own self-reflection methods and tools and highlight their benefits. • Support the ST in systematically documenting experiences (lesson planning, feedback, personal learning and insights). • Highlight current collaborative reflective practices (collegial exchanges, participation in online teacher-support groups, supervision groups).
12	**Provide Constructive Feedback** Discuss music-didactic practices. • Address metacognition: clarify and explain the patterns and reasoning behind teaching strategies. • Create space for regular conversation and reflection via the medium that works best for everyone. • Encourage the use of tools for self-reflection (e. g. voice-memo prompts, photo-journal prompts) and self-assessment (e. g. lists of teacher competencies).
13	**Share Learning** Facilitate Peer Mentoring • Support peer learning among STs through group reflection. • Facilitate interdisciplinary networking (student teachers teach student teachers).
14	**Stay a Learner** Learn from each other – share learning opportunities. • Benefit from what STs bring from their home institutions, personal skills, and experiences with different musical styles. • Raise awareness of local strengths (music educational offerings, school culture, contextual traditions and requirements, etc.). • Seek feedback for yourself as MT (reciprocal mentoring).

15	**Act as a Team Player**
	Develop collaborative learning and working skills in school settings. • Involve STs in collaborative work such as school curriculum design, planning school events, projects, field trips, etc. • Discuss how effective teams work: ensuring all voices are heard, developing listening skills, establishing clear feedback policies. • Give insight into faculty peer-learning and collaboration structures between teachers at your school.

Introductory Conversation Guide

A reflective and planning guide for music education students participating in a school internship abroad



General note: Begin with the ★ questions (discuss together). Each non-starred question is labelled for *student teacher* or *mentor teacher*. Write notes in the corresponding columns. Sections may be revisited throughout the internship.

Student Teacher Notes	Guiding Questions	Mentor Teacher Notes
	1. Context & Orientation	
Notes:	★ How would you describe the educational and music education system in this school environment?	Notes:
Notes:	★ Which cultural, linguistic, or curricular features are most important to know to complete this internship successfully?	Notes:
Notes:	(Mentor Teacher) What are the key characteristics of this school (type of school, students/age groups, music programme, schedule, particular policies, classroom routines, cultural norms)?	Notes:
	2. Aspirations & Professional Growth (expectations, hopes, challenges)	
Notes:	★ What mutual expectations do you have for a successful internship experience?	Notes:
Notes:	(Student Teacher) What specific competencies do you hope to develop/gain during this internship?	Notes:
Notes:	(Student Teacher) What feels familiar, and what areas are you eager to explore or find challenging?	Notes:

3. Roles, Activities & Participation		
Notes:	★ What teaching and observation schedule is realistic (hours, groups, repertoire, workload)? ★ Is there a preferred type of content/group the student teacher wants to teach (due to previous experience)?	Notes:
Notes:	(Student Teacher) In what ways will the student teacher participate in school life beyond the classroom? How does the student teacher feel about participating in teaching beyond the classroom?	Notes:
Notes:	(Mentor Teacher) What does the first/typical school day look like, including expectations beyond classroom time (meetings, activities, etc., …)?	Notes:
4. Communication & Feedback		
Notes:	(Student Teacher) How do you prefer to receive mentor feedback (timing, format, reflective dialogue)?	Notes:
Notes:	(Mentor Teacher) In which way would you like to be supported by your mentor (teaching preparation, access to materials/resources, musical pedagogical practice, reflection, etc.)? Is there anything your mentor should know about you?	Notes:

5. Language, Preparation & Logistics		
Notes:	★ What is the language of instruction during the internship, and how will language be managed?	Notes:
Notes:	(Student Teacher) What preparation or materials are needed before or early in the internship?	Notes:
Notes:	(Student Teacher) Are there concerns related to language use, logistics, or intercultural adaptation?	Notes:
Notes:	(Mentor Teacher) Are the expectations and requirements related to the internship, learning agreements, and assessment clearly communicated?	Notes:

Additional note:

- Any other concerns or questions for right now?
- What are you particularly looking forward to?

This worksheet reflects TEAM's focus on shared reflective practice, professional learning, and meaningful international mobility.

Cultural Reflection Tree



A reflective exercise for music education students participating in a school internship abroad

General note: This exercise invites you to explore your own cultural identity – including your musical background and understanding of music education – through the image of a tree. You should begin working on it in *preparation for departure*, but you may also return to it *during your internship* and *after you return* as well. What you take for granted in everyday life and communication, as well as in music education – e.g., repertoire, teacher-student relationships, the role of technique or improvisation – is not neutral, but reflects roots, values, and habits that often become more visible when you encounter a different system.

Draw your tree — and write in your own words what belongs in each part:

ROOTS	**TRUNK**	**LEAVES**
Origin; a sense of belonging to one or more cultural groups. For example: national/regional background(s) • family & community • musical tradition(s) • education system	Values that are important in your cultural context(s). For example: respect, discipline, creativity … • role of teacher & student • product vs. process orientation	Visible cultural expressions or signs: language & communication style • repertoire & instruments • rituals & habits • dress, gesture, symbols

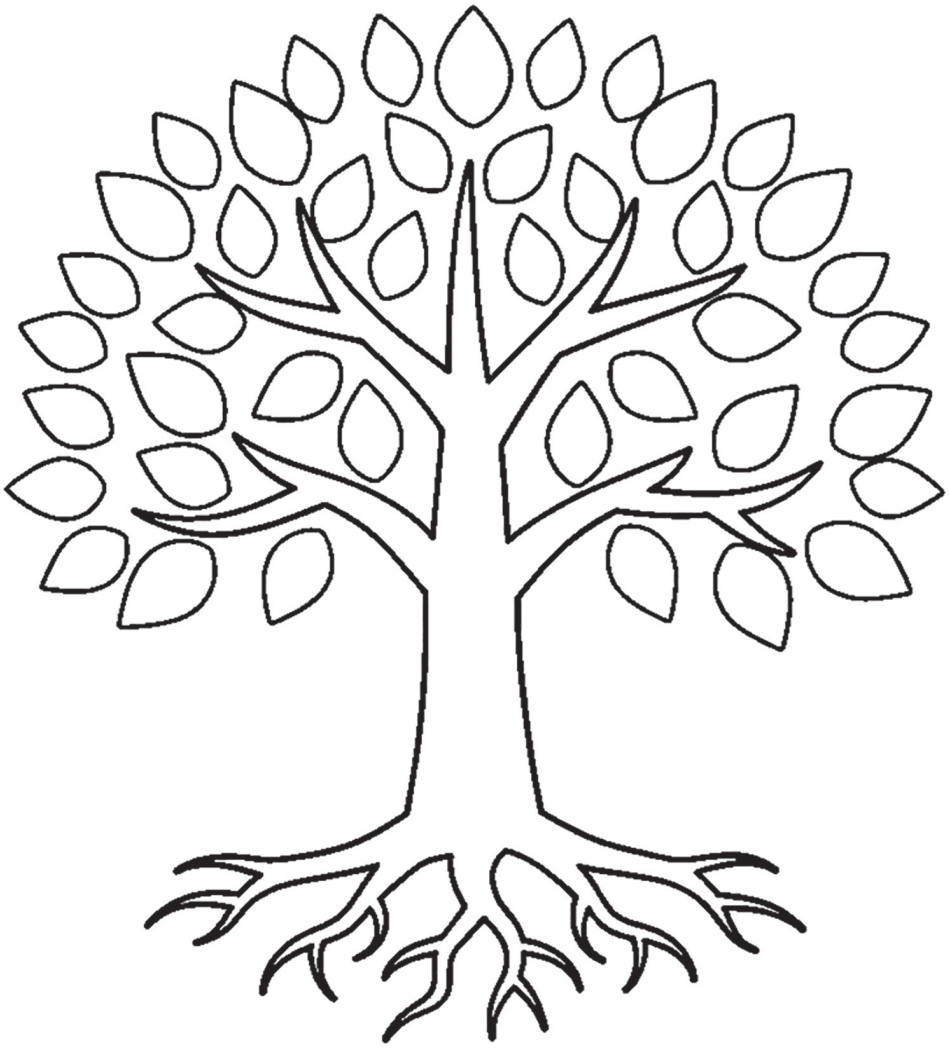
Using the exercise in three phases:

Phase 1 – Before	**Phase 2 – During**	**Phase 3 – After**
Draw your tree • Complete individually before departure • You are welcome to bring it to introductory meeting with your mentor teacher • Keep it – you will return to it	***Update & notice*** • Observe what surprises you • Add new leaves, roots, or values as you become aware of them • Note tensions or questions	***Compare & reflect*** • What changed, if anything? • Your tree might assist your debrief reflection or portfolio

Possible reflection questions:

Phase 1 – Before	**Phases 2 & 3 – During & After**
• Which cultural group(s) do you belong to? Are your roots multiple? • Which values feel most central to your identity as a musician and teacher? • What assumptions are you bringing about music education abroad?	• What surprised you in the host school – and what does that reveal about your own roots? • Were any of your values challenged? How did you respond? • What did you learn about your own musical education that you could not have learned without going abroad?

Sources: *UNESCO Intercultural Competences Framework (2013); PRACTICE Project, Erasmus+ No. 2018-1-IT02-KA201-048442 (practice-school.eu). Adapted for music education internships abroad.*



Adapted by Work Package 5 of the TEAM project for music education internships abroad. Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union. The European Union cannot be held responsible for them.

Voice Memo Prompts



A reflective journal for music education students participating in a school internship abroad

General note: It is very important that you reflect on your experiences during your school internship abroad. Each reflection should take no more than four to five minutes, and can be recorded daily, or at least every other day – a minimum of three times a week.
You can record your thoughts in a reflective journal or on a recording device to listen back to later. If recording, you might want to make some notes beforehand, or you can just speak freely.

If you need some help getting started, here are some things you could think about:

- What were my most memorable impressions since my last voice memo?
- What was particularly interesting about them? What have I learned about myself as a music teacher?

Below are a series of questions that might help you reflect more deeply on your SIA experiences:

- Are my initial SIA expectations being met? If so, or if not, in what ways?
- Are there similarities or differences between what I already know about being a teacher and my SIA experience? (In thinking about this, you may also reflect on your developing teacher identity.)
- Are there similarities or differences between music teaching and learning in my own context and in the SIA experience? (In thinking about this, you may also reflect on your developing teaching philosophy.)
- What knowledge and skills am I bringing into the SIA from my own context (subject-specific knowledge, musicking skills, personal wisdom, technical expertise)?

If you are on an SIA together with another student teacher, you may additionally ask yourself:

- What did I learn from my fellow student teachers as "peers" and what did they learn from me?
- How does having "student teachers as peers" support me during my internship? (where applicable)

For long-term SIA (3+ weeks), you may additionally consider responding to the following questions:

- What has changed or shifted for me during my internship? In what ways has this changed? Please specify the reasons.
- How have the knowledge and skills I brought into the SIA from my own context (subject-specific knowledge, personal wisdom, technical expertise) changed as I applied them in the new context?
- What knowledge, skills, impressions and values will I take back to my home institution? In what ways will they be useful back home?
- Looking back at the start of my student teaching experience, in which specific areas have I grown the most, and how can I continue to improve in these areas?

Final note:
- As the SIA reaches its end, what are the key lessons regarding becoming a music teacher that you will take with you?
- What did you contribute to your SIA that you are particularly proud of?

Photo Journal Prompts



A reflective journal for music education students participating in a school internship abroad

General note: It is well-documented that reflection deepens learning and is an important part of teacher training. One way to reflect and document your reflection is by keeping a photo journal during your school internship abroad. This will give you another way to remember your time in the host school and host country, and can help you reflect on what was important to you, and why.

Be on the lookout for concrete things you can photograph that encapsulate what you're learning. For example, perhaps a classroom was set up in a way you had never seen before and you found it worked well. You might take a picture of the set-up and include it in your journal. But please don't stop there: make notes and say why you think it was effective, what it made possible, and maybe why it is so different from the classrooms at home. This can help you to think about what priorities and goals you have as a teacher, as well as what some underlying differences in music education between your home country and the host country might be. The photos do not have to have positive connotations. If you want to document learning a hard lesson, or something you found unpleasant, that's of course also fine.

Some ideas to get you started:

- Places in the school: room set-ups, instruments, special equipment or facilities, common areas, students working on projects or in ensemble rehearsals, teachers teaching, particular teaching materials, etc.
- Cultural places: concert halls where you enjoyed a meaningful concert, art museums, etc.
- Around the city: something on your commute to school, a park you enjoyed, etc.
- … and anything else that was significant to you.

Further Considerations

- You might want to take many photos to remember your time, but these will not all necessarily belong in the photo journal. In your photo journal you will want to include visual documentation of people, places, or events that were particularly significant during your school internship abroad. Only you can decide which photos these should be.

- Your photo journal – meaning your selected photos and the notes you've written about them – can be formatted however you like, but it's best to keep everything in one place so you can look through it easily and don't have to search for individual components.
- One thing to keep in mind when keeping a photo journal is that different schools have different rules about photography. It is your responsibility to find out what the policy is at your host school. Please ask your mentor teacher explicitly about the school's photo policy, and exercise good judgment and sensitivity when photographing others. Please refrain from posting pictures of others on social media without their permission.
- This photo journal can help you to reflect both alone and together with your mentor teacher and/or university advisor, and will hopefully serve as a memory keeper of your school internship abroad that you can look back on for many years to come.

Debrief Conversation Guide



A conversation guide for music education students in school internships abroad

General note: Use this exercise as a self-reflection tool (written or recorded) or as a structured conversation guide between student and university educator. Suitable for final evaluations, *Erasmus* reports, and research assessments. Select 4–5 photos from the internship (see Photo Journal Prompts – Appendix E) before beginning.

Layer 1 Question / Prompt	Layer 2 Rationale	Layer 3 Interviewer guidance
1. Introduction		
Identify who is speaking/ writing. Note date and time.	*Establishes framing and purpose of the tool for learning and future SIA design.*	Welcome the participant. Introduce the tool. Clarify who holds the results and how they will be used.
2. Opening Narrative		
Recall the whole arc of your internship – from the first moment of anticipation to today. Which moments were most formative, positive or negative? Describe the situation, its importance, and its effect on you as a teacher.	*Generates narrative reflection to deepen learning; the why and how matter more than description of events.*	Wait before prompting – let silence work. • Repeat their last words exactly • "Can you give me a concrete example?" • "Why is this important to you?" • "Anything else worth mentioning?"
3. Peer Learning		
If placed with a peer: how did you collaborate? Was it a support or a challenge? Did you reflect together on your experiences?	*Elicits reflection on peer dynamics – mutual learning, co-construction, and the added complexity of shared placements.*	Probe further using the Layer 1 prompts. Raise if not yet addressed.
4. Photo Reflection		
Look at your selected photos. Why did you choose each one? What aspects do they capture?	*Photos act as consolidation anchors – they surface experiences that language alone may not reach.*	Ask per photo: Where? What were you doing? What were you feeling? Do they show something not yet mentioned?

5. Mentoring and Collaboration		
When and how did your mentor support you? Where might more support have helped? How did you work with other teachers or educational staff beyond classroom teaching?	*Current mentoring theory emphasises reciprocal and peer mentoring – mutual learning between mentor and mentee. Explores how this played out in the SIA context.*	Probe further using Layer 1 prompts.
6. Cultural Dimensions		
Where did you notice differences from your home context – lessons, students, colleagues, school culture? How did you respond? Was the Cultural Reflection Tree (Appendix C) helpful?	*Immersive intercultural experiences are transformative for prospective teachers. Explores development of intercultural awareness and transferable cross-cultural competencies.*	Probe further using Layer 1 prompts.
7. Language as a Barrier		
What was it like to teach in a foreign language? How did you cope? What advice would you give to others in the same situation?	*Language barriers can impede integration and lead to underperformance relative to domestic peers. Explores specific impediments and coping strategies developed.*	Probe further using Layer 1 prompts.
8. Conclusions		
What's next? How might this internship influence your professional and personal development? What learning goals or next steps could you imagine for your next placement at home? "The 3 most important things that contributed to the success of my internship were …"	*Forward-oriented consolidation. Connects experience to continued professional development and next steps.*	Ask: "Is there anything important that has not been touched on yet?" Allow time for small talk – important things often surface here. Take notes.

Methodological note: Throughout the reflection, prioritise the why and how over descriptive narration. All sections apply to both interview and self-reflection formats. The tool may be audio-recorded or completed in writing.

Checklist for Language-Sensitive Music Teaching



Practical Tools for music education students participating in a school internship abroad

"Just do it!" Trust your good communication skills on one hand; prepare yourself deliberately on the other.

1.	Acquire key subject-specific vocabulary in English (or the language of instruction) in advance.
2.	Plan key moments of your explanations very carefully and formulate them in advance (write them down!).
3.	Students may have varying levels of English; keep this in mind, as it can sometimes be difficult to assess early on and in the moment.
4.	Gather plenty of teaching and music-making materials and ideas in advance that require little language use. Especially when it comes to speaking in music lessons, "less" is truly often "more."
5.	Draw on all available means to achieve clarity in communication, such as gestures, facial expressions, conducting cues, changes of position in the room, and using objects or pictures for illustration. Consider establishing rituals, routines and signals together with the students.
6.	Be aware that there are often significant differences between national and regional contexts regarding physical proximity, touch, and non-verbal communication. Observe your mentors and the students carefully at the beginning, and don't hesitate to ask if needed.
7.	When observing lessons taught in the local language (e.g. by your mentor), use the opportunity to pay attention to communication that is not verbal – you will notice that a great deal is conveyed at this level!

APPENDIX II:

WORK PACKAGE 8
MAPPING MUSIC EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS

Music Lessons in European Schools

Appendix H provides a more detailed overview of music provision across 29 European contexts. In addition to indicating whether music is offered as a compulsory, optional, or integrated subject (i. e. arts education), the appendix includes information on the number of lessons allocated to music at different stages of schooling, together with explanatory comments that help to interpret national specificities.

As the appendix demonstrates, the diversity of music provision across Europe is considerable. Music is generally included from the beginning of formal schooling, but the duration, timetable allocation, and organisational arrangements vary substantially between countries. In most cases, music is compulsory in primary education and continues into lower secondary education, whereas provision at upper secondary level shows the greatest variation. Some countries retain music as a compulsory subject until the final years of schooling, while others offer it only as an elective or within specialist pathways.

The number of weekly lessons also differs markedly. Primary education typically includes one or two music lessons per week, although the allocation may vary from year to year within the same level. In lower secondary education, provision often remains at approximately one lesson per week, sometimes complemented by optional ensembles or extra-curricular activities. In upper secondary education, music may range from no compulsory provision to several lessons per week in arts-oriented programmes or schools.

These differences reflect not only national curriculum priorities but also varying degrees of school autonomy. In many countries, schools have considerable flexibility in organising music education, depending on factors such as teacher expertise, type of school and traditions, available resources, and the broader cultural context. As a result, music may be taught as a standalone subject, offered as an optional course, or integrated with other artistic or curricular areas.

Primary school	Lower secondary school	Upper secondary school
COMPULSORY	COMPULSORY	COMPULSORY
OPTIONAL	OPTIONAL	OPTIONAL
INTEGRATED (I)	INTEGRATED (I)	INTEGRATED (I)
NO MUSIC	NO MUSIC	NO MUSIC

° Every row presents one lesson

COUNTRIES		Music lessons	AGE RANGE														
			5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	
AUSTRIA	AT	°		I	I	I	I										
		°															
Primary: one hour per week; a second hour is dedicated to choir or music is integrated into other learning areas. *Upper secondary:* final year students choose between art or music; those who choose music have 2 hours per week. Secondary schools with a music focus (i. e. specialist music middle schools and high schools, music-focused schools) offer more hours, but the range differs substantially (from 2 hours to 4–5 hours per week.)																	
BERLIN (GERMANY)	DE	°															
		°															
		°															
Primary: Students receive two music lessons per week. *Lower secondary:* Timetable allocation varies according to school type. Music is taught together with visual arts, with a joint allocation of between 1.5 and 3 hours per week. The average for music lessons is 1 hour per week. *Upper secondary:* students must choose one arts subject – music, visual arts, or drama – and can take it either as a regular course with 3 hours per week or as an advanced course with 5 hours per week for their Abitur (final upper secondary exams) studies.																	
BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA	BA	°															
		°															
Primary and lower secondary: Music education is compulsory in primary schools, but the number of weekly classes varies. Each canton or entity in BiH sets its own educational guidelines, leading to variations in the number of music classes.																	
BULGARIA	BG	°															
Primary and lower secondary: one music lesson per week. *Upper secondary:* music is optional (0–2 hours per week). Specialised schools offer extended study.																	
CATALONIA (SPAIN)	ES	°															
		°															
Primary: Music is a compulsory subject with at least 1 lesson per week taught by a music specialist teacher. Each school is responsible for offering additional music education in line with its own educational project. *Lower secondary:* Music is compulsory in three of the four years. Schools decide in which years to offer the subject. *Upper secondary:* Multiple pathways exist, but music is only offered in some arts-track options.																	
CROATIA	HR	°															
Primary: Students receive one hour of compulsory music education throughout the eight years of primary school. *Upper secondary*: Music is a compulsory subject throughout all four years in classical, linguistic and general gymnasiums. In science- and mathematics-oriented programmes, it is offered only in the first two years of the programme.																	

COUNTRIES		Music lessons	AGE RANGE														
			5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
CYPRUS	CY	°														
		°														

Primary and lower secondary: Two music lessons per week. *Upper secondary:* One music lesson in the first year only. In the final two years, music is available only to those students who choose music as a specialist subject, usually those who wish to pursue further studies in music.

CZECH REPUBLIC	CZ	°														

Upper secondary: Music is often an elective subject, with students choosing it based on interest. Some schools may offer specialised programmes. Music education is taught only at grammar schools (gymnázium), where it is allocated 2 hours per week for the first two years. It is not taught in the 3rd or 4th year. In secondary pedagogical schools, it is compulsory and allocated 2 hours per week throughout all four years.

ESTONIA	EE	°														
		°														

Upper secondary: there are 3 compulsory courses (1 course = 35 lessons of 45 min), which can be organised as one music lesson per week or in intensive cycles.

FINLAND	FI	°														

Lower secondary: usually 1–2 hours compulsory until 8th grade, optional in 9th grade. *Upper secondary:* one course in either music or visual arts is compulsory. This requirement can be fulfilled during the second or third year of upper secondary school education. In music-oriented schools, music is compulsory throughout.

FLANDERS (BELGIUM)	BE	°			I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I

Primary: Music is integrated in the subject *Muzische vorming* (Creative and expressive education). As music is integrated with the other arts subjects, it is difficult to weekly timetable allocation. *Lower secondary:* Music is integrated in the subject *Artistieke vorming* (Artistic education). Depending on the study trajectory and the school, the subject is allotted 0 to 2 hours/week. *Upper secondary:* Music is integrated in the subject *Artistieke vorming* (Artistic education). Depending on the study trajectory and the school, the subject is allotted 0 to 1 hours/week.

GREECE	GR	°														

Primary and lower secondary: Music is a compulsory subject and is taught once a week. *Upper secondary school:* Music is not offered in general upper secondary schools – only in specialist music schools.

COUNTRIES		Music lessons	AGE RANGE													
			5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
HUNGARY	HU	°														
		°														

Primary: Generally, students receive two weekly music lessons. However, some primary schools offer a special music curriculum, where pupils attend four additional music classes per week. *Lower secondary:* One hour per week in grades 6–8. *Upper secondary:* Music is compulsory in the first two years but is optional thereafter. In both cases, music is typically allocated one lesson per week.

IRELAND	IE	°		I	I	I	I	I	I	I						
		°		I	I	I	I	I	I	I						

Primary: Time allocation for Integrated Arts Education is stated in the curriculum as 9 hours over 4 weeks. Music is integrated with Art and Drama and is not taught as a stand alone subject. The class teacher decides on how the time is divided between Music, Art and Drama.

ITALY	IT	°														
		°														

Upper secondary: While music is not a mandatory subject in most upper secondary schools, extracurricular music programmes, school choirs, and orchestras are sometimes available. Students particularly interested in music usually attend a Liceo Musicale (Music High School), where they receive specialised education in the field.

LATVIA	LV	°														
		°														

Primary school: Grades 1 to 6 have two lessons per week. *Lower secondary:* Grades 7 to 9 – one lesson per week. *Upper secondary:* Music is offered as an elective subject.

LITHUANIA	LT	°														
		°														

Upper secondary: 1 hour per week until the age of 16. In the final two years (ages 17–18), students have 2 hours for arts (optional: music, art, theatre, dance or technology).

LUXEMBOURG	LU	°		I	I	I	I	I	I							

Primary: One hour compulsory, integrated with visual arts. *Upper secondary:* Music becomes optional. However, some specialist pathways are available. Students following these pathways, particularly those also attending a music school/conservatory, may receive up to 15 hours of tuition per week. In schools offering the International Baccalaureate, arts education is compulsory from Primary through Grade 8, and optional thereafter. Some schools also offer the European Baccalaureate or Cambridge International prorammes (IGCSE and A Level), which offer comparable options at the Secondary level.

COUNTRIES		Music lessons	AGE RANGE													
			5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
MONTENEGRO	ME	°														
		°														
		°														

Primary and lower secondary: Music is compulsory across all nine grades of primary school. As an elective subject in the third cycle (grades 7–9), students can choose Music Workshop, an additional elective (2 classes per week). *Upper secondary:* The elective subject *Music My Language* is taught with two classes per week in the third and fourth grades.

NETHERLANDS	NL	°														

Primary and lower secondary: Music is one of the subjects within the compulsory Arts and Culture curriculum, however weekly timetable allocation is determined by the school. Music is compulsory in the first two years of lower secondary education, but only those preparing for higher education continue music into the third year. *Upper secondary:* Music is an optional subject at this level, but not all schools offer it. Where offered, it may be chosen as an examination subject. The information presented in the table above is in accordance with the most recent Dutch primary and secondary education reform and will come into effect from the 2027/2028 academic year. It will become mandatory for all schools from August 2031.

NORWAY	NO	°														

Primary: In Norway, each subject is given a specific time allocation for each subject across a programme. Schools have complete autonomy regarding the distribution of these hours. Music in primary education is allocated 285 hours in total. While the time allocated may vary from year to year, typically students receive on average about one hour of music per week. *Lower secondary:* 85 hours are allocated over the three year period. In some schools, students can choose additional classes through elective courses. *Upper secondary*: Music is optional but students can choose music as a specialised programme, where they receive up to 22 hours of music tuition per week. Some schools offer music as an elective subject, amounting to 1–3 hours per week.

POLAND	PL	°			I	I	I	I								

Primary and lower secondary: Music is compulsory throughout primary school. However an integrated approach to the teaching of all subjects across the curriculum has been adopted for grades 1–3. The class teacher decides how these hours are distributed. From grades 4–7, teaching is subject-based. Music is allocated one hour per week each year. *Upper secondary:* Music is taught only in one year of the four-year programme.

PORTUGAL	PT	°														
		°			I	I	I	I								

Primary: Music is one of four arts subjects, alongside visual arts, drama/theatre, and dance. *Lower secondary:* Music is compulsory in the first two years only, and is taught by a specialist teacher. It may be offered as an optional subject during the final 3 years of lower secondary school.

COUNTRIES		Music lessons	AGE RANGE													
			5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
SERBIA	RS	°														
All students have one music lesson per week across all levels.																
SLOVAKIA	SK	°														
Upper secondary: In the Gymnasium, which offers four- and five-year programmes, music is taught as part of a broader integrated subject called Art and Culture. In the National Educational Programme for upper secondary education, Art and Culture is mandatory with one music lesson per week, typically over two years.																
SLOVENIA	SI	°														
		°														
Primary: In grades 1–3, students have two hours of music per week, while in grades 4–5 they have 1.5 hours per week. *Upper secondary*: In the first year of *gimnazija* music is an independent subject and is allocated 70 hours (52 as a compulsory subject and 18 as an elective subject).																
SWEDEN	SE	°														
Primary and lower secondary: Swedish schools have autonomy in the allocation of timetabled hours. The total number of hours are distributed across the years at the discretion of the school. Schools may allocate more or less hours to a particular subject in a given year, or operate a rotation system. Typically Music averages 40–60 mins per week. *Upper secondary:* Students accepted into the National Aesthetic Programme (Music) take subjects compulsory across all national programmes, with additional music hours varying according to individual choices and profile.																
SWITZERLAND	CH	°														
		°														
Primary and lower secondary: The number of lessons varies by canton, ranging from 1–2 hours per week. *Upper secondary:* Students choose from various profiles; depending on their choice, music may not be offered at all or provided intensely,with up to 5 lessons per week.																
TÜRKIYE	TR	°														
		°														
		°														
Lower secondary: Music is compulsory at this level with a one-hour per week allocation. Students can also take an additional two hours of Music as an elective. *Upper secondary:* Music is offered as an elective course, serving as an alternative to the Visual Arts. If a student chooses music, they can take up to three hours of music in 9th and 10th grade and up to two hours in 11th and 12th grade as part of Arts Education.																

Table 1: Number of Music Lessons in the European Countries