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BUDDY SYSTEM
UNIVERSITY OF SHKODRA “LUIGJ GURAKUQI”
DEPARTMENT OF CLINICAL AND PARA-CLINICAL SUBJECTS



Erasmus+ KA2 Capacity Building in the field of Higher Education
Strengthening capacities and digital competences in biomedical education through internationalization
at home BIOSINT

101082863-BIOSINT-ERASMUS-EDU-2022-CBHE

Project number: 101082863-BIOSINT-ERASMUS-EDU-2022-CBHE

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BUDDY SYSTEM.

The buddy system is a program in which international and local students match with each other in order to enhance support, integration, and collaboration. The buddy system was established at the very beginning with the aim of supporting the new students. Its early origins started informally at universities as a need that older students guide new students of their first year. This informal mentorship helped new students navigate the campus life, understand academic expectations, and integrate socially.

In the mid-to-late 20th century, several universities established structured buddy or mentoring programs as part of their orientation and student support services. Now, this system is not only used for local students but especially for international students, who face difficulties in integrating into the academic and social life of the host universities.

WHY A BUDDY SYSTEM AT SHKODRA UNIVERSITY?

The University of Shkodra is under changes every day. This University is challenging every day with the need to involve international experiences in daily University life. Benefits of a buddy system at Shkodra University include building relationships, increasing productivity, improving studying satisfaction, providing insights, and enhancing learning experiences. A buddy system can strengthen Shkodra University community and help to challenge stereotypes, misconceptions or fears that students hold about younger or older age groups. A buddy system can also help students to feel valued and supported, teach important social skills and create a caring ethos at universities.

The Buddy System of the Departments of Clinical and Para-clinical Subjects at Shkodra University will have as a goal to help exchange students to adapt to the daily life at these Departments. Through

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this program exchange students can interact with a local student (buddy) who can provide friendship.

The main idea is that students who have experience can assist new students to adapt to the life in Shkodra city and to adapt themselves at the Departments of Clinical and Para-clinical Subjects.

STAGES OF THE BUDDY SYSTEM

The buddy system goes through different stages. It starts with an implementation plan which shall describe how a buddy system would be set up, including selection and training of buddies along with initiation processes of the program.

Roles and Responsibilities: The system will be implemented under the monitoring of the staff of *the Departments of Clinical and Para-clinical Subjects* and the *International Relation Office* of Shkodra University.

Possible Challenges: a) Mismatch between buddies. b) Lack of engagement. c) Irregular or infrequent meetings. d) Lack of Training.

Success Stories or Case Studies: Examples from other Universities about successful buddy systems will help illustrate the benefits and strategies.

Sharing experiences: At the end of each semester, participant of the system buddy will be invited to fulfil a detailed survey through which they will share their experiences. Through these surveys the points where the system should improve and we should focus more will be more evident.

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HOW DOES THE BUDDY SYSTEM ACTUALLY WORKS?

There are five steps in the buddy system in total:

1. Matching of the individuals: The first step would involve matching up the students with each other based on various criteria that would be incorporated in the applications. They are, however, not only confined to academic interests but also include extracurricular activities. Also, it is a common experience that new students are paired with older and more experienced students; therefore, they have a guide and friend in one.
2. Goals and expectations: Both parties should be clear about their goals for the smooth running of everything. This might include, but is not limited to, adjusting to the institutional culture, facilitating one through administrative processes, or even teaching techniques.
3. Regular interaction: The matched buddies have to meet and also have live and online interactions in order for their communication to be the best in can. A fixed meeting can help them have a schedule and know exactly when and where to address their concern and discuss the challenges and opportunities of growth.
4. Providing feedback: Feedback is essential as there will always be room for improvement.
5. System evaluation: Evaluating the buddy system from time to time helps to point out its effectiveness; thus, the necessary changes can be executed. At the end, when the implementation of the buddy system will have been completed, some feedback collection is to be done from participants, Albanians, and internationals, for some changes based on it.

HOW CAN WE INCORPORATE THIS SYSTEM INTO THE DEPARTMENTS OF CLINICAL AND PARA-CLINICAL SUBJECTS?

- Organizing info sessions by explaining the whole process: the form of application
- Motivate students to participate and apply.
- Publish the respective information to the University website
- Raise awareness of the publicity by designing and spreading promotional materials

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How can I help a new student?

- The support will be given in the academic area: an orientation regarding the courses, numbers of ECTS, the way of examination etc.
- Support can be given in the language barriers.
- Support can be given in introducing the local traditions.
- Support can be given in an emotional level.
- The duration of the buddy system will be until the new student feels fully integrated.

How can I register?

It is a very simple process, you should send your form with your main data, at iroshkoder@unishk.edu.al

Or

You can print it, fulfill it and send it as hard copy to the responsible staff from the Departments of Clinical and Para-clinical Subjects (Dr. Julian Kraja).

Who will mainly this system be for?

This system will be a support for international students who need someone to be by their side and guide them. This includes students from neighboring Albanian-speaking countries.

How is the evaluation of the applications done?

The application forms fulfilled by the students who want to be part of the BUDDYsystem will be evaluated by the members of the Department of Clinical and Para-clinical Subjects, in order to have the possibility to find the appropriate match for each international new student.

What qualities should a good BUDDY have?

- Friendly and cooperative
- Eager to help others
- Listen carefully the other and have the ability to extract the main information
- Be able to share his/her own experience and knowledge

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What are the benefits of being a buddy?

- A certificate will be given to the mentoring students and the participation in the buddy system will be considered a bonus for conducting future mobilities.
- Create professional connections from which several opportunities can be created
- Personal growth: gaining problem solving skills
- Create new friendships
- Be the promoter of new institutional collaborations
- Enhancing the CV and receiving the certificate
- Improved language skills and vocabulary
- Get to know new cultures and traditions

Can I be a buddy mentor if I'm a first-year student?

Yes! Even if you have just enrolled at Shkodra University or arrived in Shkodra, it is not a problem, as you can enjoy the city together. And if there are questions you do not know the answers to, just send us an e-mail and we will figure it out together.

How often do you suggest meeting?

This is up to you; however, we would suggest meeting every two weeks. The first weeks will be more intensive with questions about the Department of Clinical and Para - clinical Subjects and about Shkodra.

THE BUDDY SHOULD BE AVAILABLE:

Before arrival

- You can pick your buddy from the airport
- You can help find accommodation

Upon arrival

- You can meet in person your buddy
- You can show him/her around Shkodra city
- You might explain how the academic environment works, how are the classes organized

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ADVANTAGES BRINGING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A "BUDDY" SYSTEM IN THE DEPARTMENTS OF CLINICAL AND PARA-CLINICAL SUBJECTS:

- Improved support for students, resulting in students with improved self-confidence and emotional well-being
- Students with better academic achievements: fruitful collaboration results in students who are more motivated to achieve good academic grades
- Development of students' social skills, leadership skills, teamwork
- Creation of collaborations and agreements with international institutions
- Access to contemporary cultures and teaching methods
- Creating an attractive environment for other international students

BUDDIES COMMIT TO OBSERVE THE FOLLOWING PROCESS:

- For the initial meeting with your Buddy, choose a public location and notify a friend or family member.
- Inform someone in case of any changes, delays, cancellations, or if you are unable to attend.
- If meeting at a bar, ensure payment for your own consumption and adhere to legal and safe drinking practices.
- Provide inclusive and non-discriminatory options only.

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ANNEX 1

The BUDDY FORM

Email: _____

Phone Number: _____

First Name: _____

Last Name: _____

Date of Birth: _____

Gender: _____

Nationality: _____

Spoken language(s): _____

Country of study/work: _____

City: _____

Institution (University, Faculty): _____

Language(s) wanted for my buddy to speak: _____

Number of buddies wanted: _____

Hobbies: _____

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The study program/ The Department where you have finished your studies:

- Clinical Subjects
- Para-clinical Subjects

Year of study: I, II, III, Graduated

Postgraduate studies/Specialty: _____

Expectations: _____

I want someone with the same gender with me: Yes No

Comments, details we or your buddy should know: _____

Tick below:

Data Privacy Statement

By fulfilling this application, I acknowledge that the personal data provided herein will be used solely for the purpose of evaluating my candidacy for the System Buddy Program and for statistical evaluation for reports, scientific reports without revealing my identity.

1. Complete this form and email it to: iroshkoder@unishk.edu.al or julian.kraja@unishk.edu.al
2. You can print it, fill it and send it as hard copy to dr. Julian Kraja at the Departments of Clinical and Para-clinical Subjects.

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