STUDENTS AS CHANGE AGENTS

Students as Change Agents (SACHA) is an experiential learning programme that brings together students from different academic disciplines and levels to tackle real-world complex challenges with a social, environmental, or economic impact. The programme provides students with the opportunity for fast-track personal and professional development outside the classroom.

Due to COVID-19, SACHA transitioned online and organised four programmes throughout 2020-2021. Using different online discussion tools (Collaborate, Microsoft Teams, Mural), the programme has created an engaging virtual community that enhances the communication and collaboration between students, staff, and external partners – even when not in the same country!

*Something that stands out to me over all the phases of this project is **communication** in all its forms.*

So, not only practically in the way we learn and tried out new forms of communication with people in a virtual context, but also how we communicated about something we are all very passionate about, something that evokes a lot of emotions. We all came into this project knowing that child welfare is something we care about, but then throughout all of the programme, we tried out different ways of how to formulate these values and opinions into something substantive. And, also, once again, more practically, for example, communicating this in a video, communicating with voice, with pictures, in a report, with numbers.

– Change Agent

TRAINING

The first part of the programme consists of training in *Team Dynamics*, *Challenge Mindset*, and *Design and Data Tools*. The students learn how to communicate as a team online – skills that will be essential in the digital workplace.

LESSONS LEARNED

Allocate extra time for the students to get comfortable with the digital platforms and tools.

WELCOME TO YOUR TEAM DYNAMICS SESSION

SOCIAL ENTERPRISE ACADEMY   STUDENTS AS CHANGE AGENTS

MURAL

The second part of the programme utilises the project collaboration tool: Mural. The students navigate through board activities, such as *Research & Insights Using Data Tools* and *Empathy Mapping*, to explore the datasets, draw insights, and use data to create conversations. The tool enables innovative teams to brainstorm solutions to the challenge question and ensures that everyone's voice is heard!
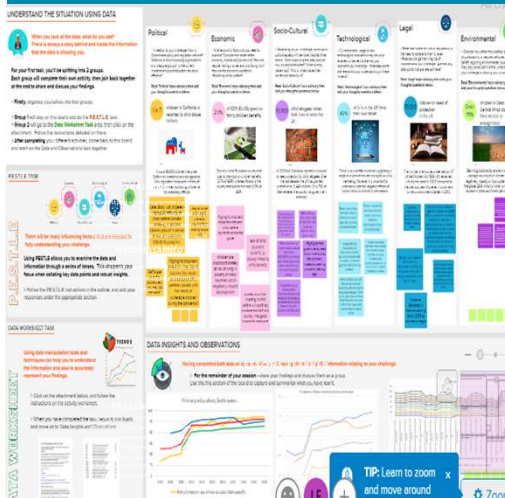
LESSONS LEARNED

Give the students a brief break in between activities and keep the activities under 45 minutes to reduce the negative impact of screen fatigue.

PRESENTATIONS

The third part of the programme includes the final presentations. The students present their report and video to the external partner and special guests. Afterwards, the students engage in a Q&A session to summarise the main points and share their thoughts.

LESSONS LEARNED

Schedule a dress rehearsal to double check timing and reduce the odds for technical issues.

Doing this challenge, going through all the modules, and talking to everyone, you really realize there are things you can do. And I realized we already have the resources, it is just putting them together and contributing and working with others, and by taking these small steps it is possible to change people's lives. I think that is a very powerful message and one that I will be applying in the future. – Change Agent

SACHA Summer '21

Students as Change Agents **Summer '21** is the most recent four-week iteration of this exciting opportunity for challenge-based experiential learning!

Working with others from across the globe, students will tackle complex challenges linked to the current COVID-19 pandemic and the UN Sustainable Development Goals, using online discussion and project collaboration tools.

To find out more, please contact: **sacha.project@ed.ac.uk**.