

Irish International Freight Association C.E.O Colm Walsh asked
to make speech about Irish Blended Learning course at
FIATA World Congress 2009, Geneva, Switzerland
Wednesday 23rd September 2009



On 23rd September last IIFA CEO Colm Walsh was asked by Markus Schoeni, FIATA Advisory Body Vocational Training, to make a special presentation about the Irish International Freight Association's experiences with delivering its inaugural FIATA Diploma course through blended learning.

The IIFA delivered the FIATA Diploma in Freight Forwarding through a system of Blended Learning from November 2008 to June 2009. 23 participants, from 13 different member firms of

IIFA, undertook the study of 9 different modules of Freight Forwarding and all were successful in achieving the FIATA Diploma.

Mr. Walsh's speech is as follows;

"Training in Forwarding goes back some time in Ireland.

Our first picture shows a preparatory meeting of the ABVT in Munich in 1980 before the Dublin FIATA Congress in 1981.



Meeting of the Working Group Committee Vocational Training in Munich (picture shows from left to right): Mr. Ekelund (Secretary of the Committee), a secretary, Dr. Kapin (President of the Committee Vocational Training), Mr. Nolan, Mr. Zeilbeck and Mr. Walsh.

The picture, which was sought out for me by Markus Schoeni and appeared in the FIATA Review of 1980, shows Per Ekelund, Mr Kapin of Austria, Mr James Nolan of Ireland, Willy Zeilbeck of FIATA and myself.

In fact at that Conference we presented certificates for a course in forwarding which we had completed that year to a number of successful students.

We undertook the FIATA Diploma in 1995 and our course material was accredited in that year. I was given the job of putting this material together and I distinctly remember that it took much longer than I had originally thought it would take - eighteen months instead of the three months I had envisaged initially.

Since 1995 the course has been delivered by our National Training Agency (FAS) to persons who wished to enter the industry and who were unemployed.

That course - which is still being offered by FAS - consists of 20 weeks of class room training and 12 weeks in house practice with a freight forwarder. That course also includes the completion of the IATA/FIATA air cargo certificate course.

Since then it has been the association's ambition to offer training to the FIATA Diploma standard to people employed in the industry in Ireland.

We thought about different ways of delivering the course, we looked at looked at all the possibilities.

As we were leaning towards delivering the course by a method other than a classroom approach, we discussed the matter with FIATA and that lead us to Ms. Sally O'Reilly in France. We are grateful for the advice and suggestions we received from her regarding her experiences with distance learning.

In distance learning we were advised - not just by Sally O'Reilly - that the fall out rate could be as high as 80%.

Our local Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport in Dublin pointed me towards the idea of regular tests as a help to students to remain focused during the course. That was another reason why we were anxious to keep the course as short as possible.

In the event we started in very late October 2008 and finished with the final examination on 30th of June this year (2009).

Following on from there we decided on a half-way-house approach in that we went for Blended Learning. This is a half distance and half classroom approach.

It has the distinct advantage for our member firms in that no time off from work is needed and, for the participants, they can undertake study at his/ her own pace and time.

In addition the participant has the opportunity to get support from us at any time - by email.

We structured the nine module course over nine tutorials.

The evening tutorials - one for each module - last 3 hours from 6PM to 9PM and include a test of the material covered at the previous tutorial. At each tutorial, hard copy notes are given to participants for study and a test is undertaken at the beginning of the following tutorial. At that second tutorial hard copy notes are supplied for the next module and so on.

This test is based on selections of Sample Questions that have been supplied with the course material.

When we applied for validation in March 2008 to the FIATA Advisory Body Vocational Training, Thomas Sim suggested that we add Sample Questions to each Learning Unit as a help to students. As you can imagine this meant a painstaking, re-trawl of all the course material.

However, the outcome has been very positive, in that it has helped us, to guide study towards more important areas from a forwarder's practical viewpoint. It also helps the student to focus his study more accurately. In case there might be an incorrect impression created I would like to emphasize that in a module there could be up to 150 sample questions given with the course material and the on-going tests undertaken in each tutorial includes 10 questions selected from the total mentioned. These are straightforward and uncomplicated questions - not essay type questions and are based precisely on the material given as course notes.

In conversations with students since the final examinations, they have told me that this helped them in their studies of the course material, a great deal.

Overall, we can say that the regular tests ensured that attendance at all of the tutorials, as test marks accounted for 40% of the overall marking. The balance of 60% was made up from the final examination and a written assignment which was handed in on the final examination date.

The make-up of our first intake is of interest in that it attracted some people with many years experience in the business of freight forwarding.

The age of the total of 23 participants ranged between 25 and 40 years of age and because of this range of age and experience, the discussions at the tutorials were very interesting and illuminating.

For many of the tutorials we also had the support of practitioners in the various fields - e.g. insurances, dangerous goods, airfreight etc. who stood in and gave illustrations from their own experiences.

We have had a very good outcome for the course - all participants achieved enough marks to gain the FIATA Diploma.

11 out of the total of 23 in fact gained more than 80% overall while 8 achieved a Merit with the balance of 4 obtaining a Pass.

We are looking forward to our second year of the FIATA Diploma.”

Mr. Thomas Sim, Chairman of FIATA Advisory Body on Vocational Training had the following to say about the IIFA’s training initiative;

“We as FIATA would also like to extend our sincere gratitude to IIFA, which now has become a true competence centre on vocational training for the Irish Forwarding industry and has developed its courses to a blended learning scheme. We are very proud that this ambitious project materialized and gathered a lot of interest from the students and the industry.”

A Presentation Ceremony for the participants of the 2008 – 2009 FIATA Diploma in Freight Forwarding was held on Tuesday 6th October 2009. Minister Dara Calleary, T.D, Minister for Labour Affairs was in attendance on the evening to present the participants with their Diplomas. Representatives from both Chambers Ireland and Skillnets were also present for this event, along with the IIFA Council and representatives from the Irish Exporters Association and the Chartered Institute of Logistics & Transport.

The second FIATA Diploma in Freight Forwarding by Blended Learning will commence on Wednesday 14th October 2009 and conclude on Tuesday 29th June 2010.

Full details of the structure of the FIATA Diploma in Freight Forwarding course are available on the Associations website www.iifa.ie

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About the FIATA World Congress

The 2009 FIATA World Congress was held from 21-25 September 2009 in Geneva, Switzerland and attracted 650 participants from 78 countries. The congress acts as a forum for national associations to present to each other the initiatives they are undertaking, discuss the difficulties they are facing worldwide and of course conduct the business of the Federation.

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