

European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes

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european consortium for accreditation

Before the European Approach...

- Different national QA regimes: fragmented assessments, multiple procedures, frameworks, visits, panels, reports, decisions
- Methodological projects on JP and QA: ENQA TEEP, ECA TEAM
- ECA project JOQAR (2010-2013): single accreditation procedures and mutual recognition of accreditation of joint programmes, tested in pilots
- NVAO accredited European Joint Master's in Strategic Border Management with assessment framework developed in JOQAR (2014-2015):

Vilnius conference: http://jpsa2017.mruni.eu/?page_id=483

Development of European Approach

- Bucharest Communiqué (2012): „we will aim to recognise quality assurance decisions of EQAR-registered agencies on joint and double degree programmes“
- Ad hoc-Expert group was asked by BFUG to make proposal
- Involvement of Bologna working groups, stakeholders, BFUG
- European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes; adopted in May 2015 by EHEA Ministers in Yerevan

European Approach for QA of JPs (EA)

- Background report (context, current QA practices, lessons learnt from JOQAR project)

- European Approach:

Introduction and definitions

A. Application in Different Systems of External QA

B. Standards for QA of Joint Programmes

C. Procedure for External QA of Joint Programmes

Note: B and C are in line with European Standards and Guidelines for QA in EHEA (ESG)

<http://www.eqar.eu/topics/joint-programmes>

Essence of European Approach

European standards and procedure

- Standards and procedure according to ESG, taking “jointness” into account

Decision/result

- By EQAR-listed agency
- Accepted in other EHEA countries by other agencies

No additional national criteria!

- “Setting standards...based on the agreed tools of the EHEA, without applying additional national criteria”

Additional national criteria problematic

(Source: ECA's JOQAR project)

Too many national criteria and national requirements in external QA/accreditation of joint programmes

- Sometimes not about quality
- Not suited for joint programmes
- Contradict each other

Very long list of examples:

- The assessment report (expert report) is required to be in the national language;
- National QA agencies which are not allowed to coordinate an international procedure / undertake a site visit abroad;
- Master thesis:
“max. 30 ECTS credits” vs. “at least 35% of the total number of credits”;
- Very detailed, national staff requirements
- ...

Definitions in EA

- **Joint programme:** An integrated curriculum coordinated and offered jointly by different HEIs from EHEA countries and leading to a double/multiple degrees or a joint degree
- **Double/Multiple degrees:** Separate degrees awarded by HEIs offering the joint programme attesting the successful completion of this programme
(If 2 degrees are awarded by 2 institutions, this is a „double degree“)

Definitions in EA

- **Joint degree:** A single document awarded by HEIs offering the joint programme and nationally acknowledged as the recognised award of the joint programme

A. Application in Different Systems of External QA

- If some of cooperating HEIs require programme accreditation/evaluation then HEIs should select a QA agency registered in EQAR
 - 45 agencies listed (www.eqar.eu) that have been positively evaluated against ESG
- Agency will use Standards and Procedure to carry out a single procedure of the entire joint programme; the decision to be recognised in all countries where the programme is offered
- European Approach may be used by self-accrediting HEIs and countries outside of EHEA

B. Standards for QA of Joint Programmes

1. Eligibility

- status; joint design/delivery; cooperation agreement

2. Learning Outcomes

- level; disciplinary field; achievement; (regulated professions)

3. Study Programme

- curriculum; credits; workload

4. Admission and Recognition

5. Learning, Teaching and Assessment

B. Standards for QA of Joint Programmes

6. Student Support

7. Resources

- staff; facilities

8. Transparency and Documentation

9. Quality Assurance

Standards in the European Approach

1. Eligibility

1.1 Status

The institutions that offer a joint programme should be recognised as higher education institutions by the relevant authorities of their countries. Their respective national legal frameworks should enable them to participate in the joint programme and, if applicable, to award a joint degree. The institutions awarding the degree(s) should ensure that the degree(s) belong to the higher education degree systems of the countries in which they are based.

Standards in the European Approach

1. Eligibility

1.2 Joint design and delivery

The joint programme should be offered jointly, involving all cooperating institutions in the design and delivery of the programme.

Standards in the European Approach

1.3 Cooperation Agreement

The terms and conditions of the joint programme should be laid down in a cooperation agreement. The agreement should in particular cover the following issues:

- Denomination of the degree(s) awarded in the programme
- Coordination and responsibilities of the partners involved regarding management and financial organisation (including funding, sharing of costs and income etc.)
- Admission and selection procedures for students
- Mobility of students and teachers
- Examination regulations, student assessment methods, recognition of credits and degree awarding procedures in the consortium

Standards in the European Approach

2. Learning Outcomes

2.1 Level [ESG 1.2]

The intended learning outcomes should align with the corresponding level in the Framework for Qualifications in the European Higher Education Area (FQ-EHEA), as well as the applicable national qualifications framework(s).

2.2 Disciplinary field

The intended learning outcomes should comprise knowledge, skills, and competencies in the respective disciplinary field(s).

Standards in the European Approach

2. Learning Outcomes

2.3 Achievement [ESG 1.2]

The programme should be able to demonstrate that the intended learning outcomes are achieved.

2.4 Regulated Professions

If relevant for the specific joint programme, the minimum agreed training conditions specified in the European Union Directive 2005/36/EC, or relevant common trainings frameworks established under the Directive, should be taken into account.

Standards in the European Approach

3. Study programme (ESG 1.2)

3.1 Curriculum

The structure and content of the curriculum should be fit to enable the students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

3.2 Credits

The European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) should be applied properly and the distribution of credits should be clear.

Standards in the European Approach

3. Study programme (ESG 1.2)

3.3 Workload

A joint bachelor programme will typically amount to a total student workload of 180-240 ECTS-credits; a joint master programme will typically amount to 90-120 ECTS-credits and should not be less than 60 ECTS-credits at second cycle level (credit ranges according to the FQ-EHEA); for joint doctorates there is no credit range specified.

The workload and the average time to complete the programme should be monitored.

Standards in the European Approach

4. Admission and Recognition [ESG 1.4]

4.1. Admission

The admission requirements and selection procedures should be appropriate in light of the programme's level and discipline.

4.2. Recognition

Recognition of qualifications and of periods of studies (including recognition of prior learning) should be applied in line with the Lisbon Recognition Convention and subsidiary documents.

Standards in the European Approach

5. Learning, Teaching and Assessment [ESG 1.3]

5.1 Learning and teaching

The programme should be designed to correspond with the intended learning outcomes, and the learning and teaching approaches applied should be adequate to achieve those. The diversity of students and their needs should be respected and attended to, especially in view of potential different cultural backgrounds of the students.

Standards in the European Approach

5. Learning, Teaching and Assessment [ESG 1.3]

5.2 Assessment of students

The examination regulations and the assessment of the achieved learning outcomes should correspond with the intended learning outcomes. They should be applied consistently among partner institutions.

Standards in the European Approach

6. Student Support [ESG 1.6]

The student support services should contribute to the achievement of the intended learning outcomes. They should take into account specific challenges of mobile students.

Standards in the European Approach

7. Resources [ESG 1.5 & 1.6]

7.1 Staff

The staff should be sufficient and adequate (qualifications, professional and international experience) to implement the study programme.

7.2 Facilities

The facilities provided should be sufficient and adequate in view of the intended learning outcomes.

Standards in the European Approach

8. Transparency and Documentation [ESG 1.8]

Relevant information about the programme like admission requirements and procedures, course catalogue, examination and assessment procedures etc. should be well documented and published by taking into account specific needs of mobile students

Standards in the European Approach

9. Quality Assurance [ESG 1.1 & part 1]

The cooperating institutions should apply joint internal quality assurance processes in accordance with part one of the ESG.

C. Procedure for external QA of joint programmes

- The cooperating institutions should jointly select a suitable EQAR-registered quality assurance agency.
- The agency should communicate appropriately with the competent national authorities of the countries in which the cooperating higher education institutions are based.

C. Procedure for external QA of joint programmes

1. Self-Evaluation Report
2. Review Panel
3. Site Visit
4. Review Report
5. Formal Outcomes and Decision
6. Appeals
7. Reporting
8. Follow-Up
9. Periodicity

The procedure according to the European Approach

1. Self-Evaluation Report [ESG 2.3]

- Jointly submitted by the cooperating HEIs.
- Should contain comprehensive information that demonstrates the compliance of the programme with the Standards.
- Necessary information about the respective national frameworks of the cooperating HEIs to understand the context/national positioning of the programme
- Focus explicitly on the distinctive feature of the joint programme as a joint endeavour of HEIs from more than one national higher education system.

The procedure according to the European Approach

2. Review Panel [ESG 2.3 & 2.4]

- At least 4 panel members; expertise in relevant subject(s), including labour market, QA expertise
- International expertise and experience. Collectively, knowledge of the HE systems of the HEIs involved and the language(s) of instruction. At least 2 countries involved in the consortium
- At least one student.
- Impartiality and fairness; HEIs may object against a panel member, but have no veto right
- The agency should brief the experts on review activity, role, specifics of a joint programme.

The procedure according to the European Approach

3. Site Visit [ESG 2.3]

- Should enable the review panel to discuss the joint programme based on SER and assess whether the programme complies with the Standards
- The site visit should therefore include discussions with representatives of all HEIs; management HEIs and JP, staff, students, alumni, professional field.
- Although the site visit should normally be restricted to one location, the provision at all locations has to be taken into account.

The procedure according to the European Approach

4. Review Report [ESG 2.3 & 2.6]

- Should contain evidence, analysis and conclusions with regard to the Standards.
- Should contain recommendations for developing the programme further.
- Panel should make recommendation for decision.
- The conclusions and recommendations should pay particular attention to the distinctive features of the joint programme.
- The institutions should have the opportunity to comment on a draft version of the review report and request correction of factual errors.

The procedure according to the European Approach

5. Formal Outcomes and Decision [ESG 2.5]

- Agency should take a decision on the basis of the review report and the recommendation for the decision, considering the comments by HEIs as appropriate.
- In case the review results in an accreditation decision, it grants or denies the accreditation (with or without conditions), based on the Standards
- The agency may supplement the formal outcome and the accreditation decision by recommendations.
- The agency should give reasons for its accreditation decision.

The procedure according to the European Approach

6. Appeals [ESG 2.7]

- The institutions should have the right to appeal against a formal outcome or an accreditation decision. Therefore, the agency should have a formalised appeals procedure in place.

The procedure according to the European Approach

7. Reporting [ESG 2.6]

- The agency should publish the review report and, if applicable, the formal outcome or the accreditation decision on its website.
- At least an English summary of the review report and an English version of the decision, including its reasons, should be published.

The procedure according to the European Approach

8. Follow-up [ESG 2.3]

- The agency should agree with the cooperating institutions a follow-up procedure to assess the fulfilment of conditions – if applicable – and/or to evaluate the follow-up actions on recommendations – if applicable.

The procedure according to the European Approach

9. Periodicity [ESG 1.10]

- The joint programme should be reviewed periodically every 6 years. If there is a positive accreditation decision it should be granted – if the decision is positive – for a period of 6 years. During the 6-year period, agency should be informed about changes in the consortium offering the joint programme.

First experiences with European Approach

1. NVAO accreditation (30 June 2016) of new Bachelor's programme International Teacher Education for Primary Schools (ITEPS) provided by Stenden University of Applied Sciences, in cooperation with University College of South East Norway and University College Zealand (Denmark)

First experiences with European Approach (cont.)

2. AQ Austria accreditation (March 2017, conditions) of Joint MA European Political Science (EuroPS): new programme, EU project funding. Consortium:

- University of Salzburg (PLUS)
- University of Ljubljana (ULJU)
- Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje (UKIM)
- European University of Tirana (UET)
- University of Tirana (UTIR)
- FAMA College (FAMA) – Prishtina
- University of Business and Technology (UBT) – Prishtina
- University of Sarajevo (UNSA)
- Sarajevo School of Science Technology (SSST)

First experiences with European Approach (cont.)

3. ZevA accreditation (18 July 2017) of “Maritime Operations” (M.Sc.)

jointly offered by Hochschule Emden-Leer and
Western Norway University of Applied Sciences

Some other procedures ongoing or announced

Also used for internal QA of joint programmes (TU
Munich: *system accredited*)

ECA reports on joint programmes

Framework for
Fair Recognition
of Joint Degrees



Axel Aerden & Jenneke Lokhoff

eca

european consortium for accreditation

Guidelines for
Good Practice for
Awarding Joint Degrees



Axel Aerden & Hanna Reczulska

eca

european consortium for accreditation

JOQAR Observation
Missions:
Evaluation Report



Thomas Blanc de la Carrere & Mark Frederiks

eca

european consortium for accreditation

Single Accreditation of
Joint Programmes:
Pilots Evaluation Report



Thomas Blanc de la Carrere & Mark Frederiks

eca

european consortium for accreditation

Assessment framework
for joint programmes



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Portal:Joint programmes



The Joint programmes portal provides information on the quality assurance of joint programmes, including accreditation issues, on the recognition of degrees awarded by joint programmes and on Erasmus Mundus. In addition, the portal provides a check-list for joint programmes.

Terminology

A clear presentation of the joint programme terminology and its concepts, with background information and agreed upon definitions.

The Checklist

The Checklist provides the lessons learnt from quality assurance as good practices for developing and managing joint programmes.

Practical guidelines

These practical guidelines come from different sources and cover several topics, such as sustainability, employability, etc.

European Approach for Quality

Assurance of Joint Programmes

Outcomes Peer Learning Activity 5 - 6 October 2017, The Hague, The Netherlands.

Quality assurance

How to deal with specific internal and external quality assurance and with varying national quality assurance regimes.

Erasmus Mundus

Everything you need to know about Erasmus Mundus, including an overview of all Erasmus Mundus Master and Doctorate programmes.

Recognition

Article overview

Joint programmes from A to Z



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