Quality assurance in Joint Programmes:

the role of the European and National Qualification Frameworks in establishing Joint Programmes

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Six honest serving-men

I KEEP six honest serving-men
(They taught me all I knew);
Their names are What and Why and When
And How and Where and Who.

Rudyard Kipling, The Elephant's Child
From the «Just So Stories», 1902
Why do we need a QA system?

- **To improve the programme**

- Good international practice (Bologna-process, ESG-standards)
- Sustainability of the programme
- Legal obligations (the agreement, national legislation, national accreditation)
- Recruitment/PR (good evaluations = good PR)
- Erasmus Mundus application (10% of max score)

- External stakeholders want it
- Individual institutions want it
- Students want it
- Teachers want it
Bologna Process – Quality Assurance

• Promotion of European co-operation in quality assurance with a view to developing comparable criteria and methodologies. (Bologna Declaration)

• “We adopt the standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher education Area as proposed by ENQA” (Bergen Communique, 2005)

• “We adopt the overarching framework for qualifications in the European Higher Education Area, comprising three cycles (including with national context, the possibility of intermediate qualifications), generic descriptors for each cycle based on learning outcomes and competences, and, and credit ranges in the first and second cycles. (Bergen Communique, 2005)
ESG-Standards

Institutions should have a **policy and associated procedures** for the assurance of the quality and standards of their programmes and awards.

They should also commit themselves explicitly to the **development of a culture** which recognises the importance of quality, and quality assurance, in their work.

To achieve this, institutions should **develop and implement a strategy** for the continuous enhancement of quality. The strategy, policy and procedures should have a formal status and be publicly available. They should also include a role for students and other stakeholders.
Erasmus Mundus requirement

A.5 Quality assurance and evaluation (10 % of the max. score)

• Under this criterion applicant EMMCs will have to describe the quality assurance and evaluation strategy envisaged by the consortium in order to ensure efficient monitoring of the course (from both the content and administrative points of view) and its regular improvement during the five years of implementation.

A.5.1 Describe the internal evaluation strategy and mechanisms in place.

A.5.2 Describe the external quality assurance envisaged.
Quality assurance system

- Quality assurance should take place in accordance with a plan that ensures continuity and an overview. It should be a recurring process.

Good practice examples: Tuning projects, JOIMAN, EUA Guidelines for Quality Enhancement in European Joint Master Programmes, EM Excellence Website
Quality assurance of joint programmes
Quality Assurance: what and when

- Quality assurance of
  - the programme as a whole
  - courses / modules
  - learning outcomes
  - workload / use of ECTS
  - administrativ & support services
  - research

- Quality assurance during
  - the development phase
  - the implementation phase
Good principles for a QA System

Partners should adopt a plan for a quality assurance system before the programme starts, in order to ensure **predictability and transparency**.

- Partners should prepare their own courses or develop courses *jointly*. The QA should be the same as for ordinary courses at the institution.
- Courses should be approved by all the partners according to a system *jointly* decided on.
- Quality assurance procedures for all *joint* processes (such as admission, diploma design) should be decided *jointly*.
- Each institution should be familiar with the other institutions’ procedures for quality assurance of local processes.
- The study programme must be **coherent and holistic**. A system and procedures for regular evaluation of the programme must be prepared jointly.
- The collaborating institutions should establish a governing body that is in charge of the development and quality assurance of the study programme.
"Joint": know the consequences ...
Criteria for jointness - I

- The aims of the programme are clearly defined in terms of learning outcomes and are in line with the European qualification framework as well as national frameworks.
- There is a formal agreement between the participating institutions.
- Mechanisms for cooperation are spelled out in the agreement and understood by all parties. Responsibilities are clearly defined and shared.
- A common sustainable funding strategy is in place.
- A language policy is in place.

Report: Joint Master’s Programmes – Joint Evaluations, A Nordic Challenge,
Criteria for jointness - II

- The programme is planned and organised as a unit in which the courses contribute to the whole.
- Academic and administrative aspects of the programme are adequately staffed and funded. The infrastructure meets the needs of the programme.
- Students are secured adequate mobility
- The rights of the students are secured at all institutions
- Academic staff/scholar mobility is provided for
- Information about the programme is relevant and easily accessible to students and other stakeholders.

European qualifications framework

- Qualification framework: Provides a **systematic description of the full range of qualifications within a given education system**, as well as ways in which learners can navigate between them.

- A European framework is less detailed than national frameworks, but its purpose is to provide an overarching framework that will **simplify mobility, transparency and recognition** between national systems.

- Stipulate **outline and boundary** of national frameworks
- **Not prescribe** the content or form of national frameworks

The purpose of national frameworks

- Make explicit the purposes and aims of qualifications
- Provide a context for the review, articulation and development of existing qualifications
- Provide a context for the design of new qualifications
- Promote the attainment of qualifications
- Influence the reform of qualifications
- Facilitate curricular change
- Support institutions in meeting their responsibility to learners and other stakeholders
- Promote attractiveness of higher education

### Indicator 3: Implementation of national qualifications framework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of countries in each score category for Indicator 3</th>
<th>Green (5)</th>
<th>Light green (4)</th>
<th>Yellow (3)</th>
<th>Orange (2)</th>
<th>Red (1)</th>
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</table>
| A NQF compatible with the overarching framework of qualifications of the EHEA has been developed, and all national qualifications are visibly linked with learning outcomes. National qualifications have been included in the NQF through a quality assurance procedure. The agreed self-certification procedure with participation of international experts has been completed, including publication of a final report. | A NQF compatible with the overarching framework of qualifications of the EHEA has been developed and:  
- all necessary formal decisions for establishing the framework have been taken  
- implementation of the NQF has started  
- the agreed self-certification procedure has started | A proposal for a NQF compatible with the overarching framework of qualifications of the EHEA has been discussed at the national level but the necessary formal decisions for establishing the framework have not yet been taken |  
A proposal for a NQF compatible with the overarching framework of qualifications of the EHEA has been prepared and  
- includes generic cycle descriptors based on learning outcomes  
- includes ECTS credit ranges in the first and second cycles and a timetable for consulting relevant stakeholders has been drawn up  
but the consultation process has not yet been completed |  
The development process leading to a NQF compatible with the overarching framework of qualifications of the EHEA has been completed but no timetable for consultation or adoption has been established or the development process leading to a NQF compatible with the overarching framework of qualifications of the EHEA has been launched but has not been completed. Or work on the development process leading to a NQF compatible with the overarching framework of qualifications of the EHEA has not been launched or is at a preliminary or exploratory stage. |
Tuning project
– complementing the frameworks

Tuning develops reference points for common curricula on the basis of agreed competences and learning outcomes as well as cycle level descriptors for many subject areas. This should enhance recognition and European integration of diplomas, taking into consideration the diversity of cultures.

Tuning Methodology

THE TUNING DYNAMIC QUALITY DEVELOPMENT CIRCLE

Definition of degree profile
Indication of resources
Programme design: definition of learning outcomes / competences
Programme quality enhancement
Selection of types of assessment
Selection of teaching and learning approaches
Evaluation and improvement (on the basis of feed back and feed forward)

Construction of curricula: content and structure
The role of QF in the development phase

Qualifications Frameworks and the development of joint programmes

The European Qualifications Framework for Higher Education (Dublin Descriptors), approved in Bergen 2005
The European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning, adopted by the European Parliament in April 2008

National Qualifications Frameworks for each participating country (if such is in place)
- Knowledge
- Skills
- General competences

Expected Learning Outcome at Joint Programme Level

- Expected learning outcome at module/unit level
Designing the programme  
- Constructing the curriculum

- Name of the degree and name of the study programme
- Programme profile and objectives / aims
- The programme’s relevance (to society, work etc.)
- Expected learning outcome on completion of the programme (knowledge, skills and transferable skills) and qualifications
- Content, language of instruction
- The academic structure of the study programme (courses/modules, study progress, specialisation/study tracks if relevant)
- Compulsory requirements for the study programme (for example: the Master’s thesis, requirements for study progress )
- ECTS credits and students’ workload
- Teaching methods/pedagogy and syllabus
- Assessments and the grading scales used at the respective partners
- Mobility model (student and teacher mobility) and place of study
- Achieved competence in relation to further studies or work opportunities
Tools and references


- **Nordic Council:** Joint Master’s Programmes – Joint Evaluations, A Nordic Challenge,

- **Bologna Process:** A Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area (2005)
  www.bologna-bergen2005.no/Docs/00.../050218_QF_EHEA.pdf

- **Bologna Process:** Bologna Process Stocktaking Report 2009
  www.ond.vlaanderen.be/.../bologna/.../Stocktaking_report_2009_FINAL.pdf

- **Tuning project:** http://tuning.unideusto.org/tuningeu/

- **Dublin Descriptors:**
  http://www.jointquality.nl/content/descriptors/CompletesetDublinDescriptors.doc

- **EM Excellence Website:** http://ec.europa.eu/education/erasmus-mundus/doc1274_en.htm

- **EUA:** Guidelines or Quality Enhancement in European Joint Master Programmes
Thank you for your attention!