

# European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes

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# Current status regarding accreditation of joint programmes

- Different national QA regimes: fragmented assessments, multiple procedures, frameworks, visits, panels, reports, decisions
- Bucharest Communiqué (2012): „we will aim to recognise quality assurance decisions of EQAR-registered agencies on joint and double degree programmes“
- European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes; adopted in May 2015 by EHEA Ministers in Yerevan
- First experiences with application of European Approach

# 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
- ...

# 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)*

- Adopted by EHEA Ministers in Yerevan, 14-15 May 2015
- <http://www.eqar.eu/topics/joint-programmes>

# 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



# Joint degree: example



Single document

Signed by the competent authorities of the institutions involved in the joint programme

Replaces the separate (institutional/national) degrees



# 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
- 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

# Standards in the European Approach

1. Eligibility
2. Learning Outcomes
3. Study Programme
4. Admission and Recognition
5. Learning, Teaching and Assessment
6. Student Support
7. Resources
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

## 1.3 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

# The procedure according to the European Approach

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

## 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

## 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.

# First experiences with European Approach

Accreditation of new joint programme by NVAO  
(decision 30 June 2016):

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.)

Joint MA European Political Science (EuroPS): new programme, EU project funding, procedure by AQ Austria. Consortium:

- University of Salzburg (PLUS)
- University of University of Pavia (UPAV)
- 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)

# ECA reports on 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.



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## Terminology

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

## The Check-list

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

## Practical guidelines

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

## Key publications

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An overview of the most relevant publications with for each a link to a dedicated article and the download page.

## Quality assurance

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

## Erasmus Mundus

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

## Recognition

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Awarding degrees for joint programmes and the recognition of these degrees require specific information and documentation.

## Article overview

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All the articles which are part of the Joint programmes portal are available here and presented alphabetically.





# Thank you for your attention



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