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GUIDELINES FOR QUALITY ENHANCEMENT IN EUROPEAN JOINT MASTER PROGRAMMES

EMNEM – EUROPEAN MASTERS NEW EVALUATION METHODOLOGY GUIDELINES FOR HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

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Erasmus Mundus

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FOREWORD

These Guidelines for Quality Enhancement in European Joint Master Programmes are addressed to all higher education institutions either considering or actually running joint programmes. It is the outcome of the follow-up to EUA's 2003-2004 Joint Masters Project, which highlighted a number of challenges to be tackled in Europe in the years ahead. Foremost among these is the challenge for institutions to assume responsibility for enhancing the quality of their programmes through a more robust and systematic approach.

As well as drawing on the outcomes of the Joint Masters Project, these Guidelines also benefit from EUA's considerable experience in supporting the development of quality culture in institutions – work which has been a key pillar of EUA's activities in recent years.

This Bologna decade has already been marked by an increasing interest in the European dimension of higher education, and joint programmes – particularly at master level – have become a main focus for inter-institutional cooperation. While few would doubt the attraction of joint programmes either to institutions or to students wishing to benefit from the experience of studying outside their national environment, the difficult reality for joint programmes in Europe shows that many factors have to be in place if positive outcomes are to be achieved.

These Guidelines have been produced to help institutions in their reflection on inter-institutional cooperation and joint programme development. They are inspired by the belief that if institutions ask themselves the right questions at the right time, they will significantly improve their chances of making the right decisions.

It is particularly appropriate that EUA's work on these Guidelines has been supported by funding from the European Commission's Erasmus Mundus Programme, itself a major catalyst for new joint master programmes across the continent.

Professor Georg Winkler
EUA President

□ ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

These Guidelines were produced after a period of intensive work from a large number of people. Firstly, EUA would like to thank all the members of the Steering Committee of the *European Masters New Evaluation Methodology* (EMNEM) project for their dedicated commitment and thoughtful contributions. Above all, thanks are due to Stefanie Hofmann who courageously assumed the onerous task of translating the ideas of the Steering Committee[1] into the concrete text of this document. We also extend particular thanks to the Chair of the Steering Committee Chair, Professor Jürgen Kohler, for his tireless efforts to ensure that the Project was pursued and completed in the best possible manner. The Guidelines would not be what they are today without the input of a great number of EUA member institutions – academics, administrators and students – who shared their experience of joint programmes with us, and generously offered their comments to various drafts of the document. Finally EUA would like to thank the Directorate General for Education and Culture of the European Commission for providing valuable support to this project.

Andrée Sursock
EUA Deputy Secretary General

David Crosier
EUA Programme Development Director

INTRODUCTION

Since the Bologna Declaration was launched in June 1999, the "European dimension" of higher education has become a matter of increasing interest for Europe's higher education institutions. One major innovation that has given more substance to this notion is the development of joint degree programmes. Not only have European joint degrees been mentioned frequently in ministerial declarations, they have also been promoted by the European Commission, in particular through the launch of the Erasmus Mundus programme, as a means of making European higher education attractive both within Europe and to the wider world.

The European University Association (EUA) has been interested to understand better how higher education institutions are realising a vision of European cooperation and development through joint programmes. With this aim in mind, EUA developed and undertook a project on joint master programmes in Europe from 2002-2004, focusing on cooperation at the master level. This project worked closely with eleven established joint master programmes to identify issues of relevance throughout Europe.

The EUA Joint Masters Project report identifies a number of crucial issues related to quality, arising from the sometimes weak anchoring of joint programmes within institutions. Indeed, as the articulation of responsibilities within and between institutions can be problematic for joint programmes, it becomes difficult for them to find a stable place in an emerging European system whose national components are in a state of flux and transition. The Project therefore recommended that further work should be undertaken by EUA on how quality for joint programmes could be enhanced and developed.

These guidelines for institutions are the result of a follow-up project undertaken with the involvement of European higher education institutions, specialists of joint programmes, students and quality assurance agencies. This project, the European Masters New Evaluation Methodology (EMNEM), was supported by funding from the European Commission's Erasmus Mundus programme, and has overseen the development of these Guidelines which aim to help institutions involved in developing new joint master programmes or improving existing programmes. The Guidelines were drafted principally by Stefanie Hofmann, policy officer of the German accreditation agency ACQUIN, and Vice President of the European Network of Quality Assurance Agencies (ENQA), on behalf of the EMNEM project Steering Committee.

The draft was initially developed from January to December 2005, and involved widespread consultation, including through a seminar where different representatives of institutions involved in running joint programmes were invited to comment on the issues raised in the text and, subsequently, to comment on the revised draft.

USING THE GUIDELINES

These Guidelines aim to provide different stakeholders involved in joint masters with a clear set of questions and issues, which they could usefully address in their daily work. Information and advice are provided for anyone involved or interested in the quality assurance of joint masters. The main audience for the Guidelines are higher education institutions, and in particular the institutional leadership, academic and administrative staff. While this is not a document aimed at students, it is one which has considered the needs of students as being paramount in all aspects of developing and running joint programmes.

These Guidelines have necessarily been conceived with a range of different users and usages in mind. They are inspired by the conviction that concern for quality should be uppermost in the minds of all involved in joint programmes from the moment of initial conception of a programme, and throughout its entire lifetime. Hence the concern for quality should underpin all aspects of programme development and implementation, and not be thought about only at the moment when some form of evaluation is desired or required. Thus the Guidelines address both how to develop joint programmes and how to assure their quality.

The Guidelines focus both on the specificities of a joint master curricular design while also taking its institutional and inter-institutional implications into account. The focus is deliberately on internal quality enhancement. Internal quality is the important first step, which may be complemented by some form of external quality assurance procedures. Hence these guidelines deliberately leave aside specific forms of external evaluation or accreditation, which is the topic of a parallel ENQA project. The intention is to understand what questions need to be considered by the institutions involved to develop an inter-institutional quality culture in which all partners are responsible for the quality of all aspects of their joint programme.

While joint programmes are not restricted to second-cycle or master degrees, there are several good reasons why many joint programmes are currently being developed at the master level:

■ Students in the second cycle will generally have the maturity to gain maximum benefit from such programmes and from the periods of mobility that they entail;
■ Second cycle programmes tend to be more specialised, often focusing on particular professionally-oriented outcomes and requiring a high degree of commitment from students;
■ As the programmes take place over a shorter time frame, some implementation problems may be better managed.

The Guidelines are intended to be flexible, and to be adaptable for all kinds of joint programmes. While they highlight specific characteristics of joint master programmes, they may equally be applied to other joint programmes, for example in the first cycle.

The first chapter, *Basic Assumptions and Starting Points*, defines the core elements underpinning joint degrees, and provides a brief introduction to the principles on which the Guidelines have been developed. It should be of interest to all who wish to reflect in depth on the specific nature of joint programmes and the implications for quality enhancement.

The second chapter, *From Planning to Action*, considers how quality enhancement measures can be implemented within joint programmes, outlining issues which need to be considered at different levels of institutions. These measures are inspired by a concept of quality as "fitness of purpose" and "fitness for purpose", which the Project has considered as the most appropriate conception upon which to build a culture of inter-institutional quality. This concept can be both understood easily and applied effectively, and therefore the chapter should engage those who are interested in a theoretical underpinning for practical measures of quality enhancement for joint programmes.

The third chapter, *Quality Assurance for a Joint Master Programme*, considers the different phases of a quality cycle, and the issues to be thought through during these different phases. It also examines the relationship between quality assurance and recognition.

The fourth chapter, *Quality Situations in Practice*, examines in greater depth the different steps involved in the two main quality situations relevant for the Guidelines – setting up a new joint degree programme and evaluating a running joint degree programme.

The fifth chapter *Quality-related Questions,* offers a list of issues and questions that should be reflected upon in all processes related to the quality of joint programmes. This is not intended as a comprehensive or rigid list, but rather as one that should be easily adaptable to the needs of all joint programmes.

The sixth chapter, *From Points of Reference to Points of Concern,* concludes the guidelines by reflecting upon four key issues that are likely to provide a major challenge to all joint programmes: the organisation of mobility, funding, language policy and the logistical challenge of managing a joint degree programme.

Different usage of this document depends on the needs of the reader. The Guidelines are intended to be neither prescriptive nor normative, and hence they are open for, and indeed require, interpretation. They need to be adjusted to the context of each specific joint degree programme and in no way should be considered as a checklist asking for compliance. On the contrary, the quality-related criteria and questions outlined here are explicitly meant as points of reference to which each individual joint master can relate. Hence, these are points to be considered when developing or running a joint master programme and do not replace the work of defining and prioritising relevant quality indicators against which each programme can assess its own achievements and progress.

A. BASIC ASSUMPTIONS AND STARTING POINTS

This chapter outlines key features of the joint masters programmes for which the Guidelines have been developed, as well as the basic assumptions about responsibility for quality improvement within higher education institutions.

While a wide range of different types of joint programmes exist, these Guidelines are designed for those study programmes which are developed and implemented jointly by several institutions in different countries. For such joint degree programmes, overcoming geographical separation is a crucial issue for students and staff alike. The Guidelines therefore emphasise primarily issues related to physical student and staff mobility, while being fully aware that there are different potential solutions to this issue, including for example the development of virtual mobility through distance or e-learning. Typically, in programmes for which these Guidelines hope to be relevant, students from each participating institution study specified parts of the programme at other institutions, and these periods of study and exams passed at partner institutions are recognised fully and automatically by the partners. Professors of each participating institution may also teach at other institutions. Finally, the joint programme should of course lead to the award of a degree, in this case a qualification at master level.

Ideally, the programme will be embedded in an all-embracing quality culture marked by a distinct "culture of jointness". The "culture of jointness" refers to the fact that the whole is more than the sum of its parts and that the quality of the whole rather than simply the individual parts must be taken into account. The notion of quality culture is thus not restricted to one institution, but functions across institutional and national borders. All those who are working together in order to make the realisation of the joint programme a success therefore follow a shared aim, while not necessarily working under the same conditions or approaching the programme from the same starting point.

The quality-oriented implementation of a joint degree programme requires a great deal of additional work and effort from all parties involved and it is helpful to be aware of the following key requirements which need to be met in order to succeed in this adventure:

1. A joint degree programme is a highly complex, coordinated activity of partners. *Cooperation and coordination* are hence crucial for the realisation of any joint degree programme.

2. Often, a central coordination structure will not be institutionalised – at least not in terms of an infrastructure. In many cases, coordination will take place mostly in informal cooperative structures. Hence, the joint degree programme – in terms of organisation – may be characterised as a collaborative initiative with a central coordination supported and "fed" by two or more universities. These universities, in turn, will have their own coordination and decision-making structures which may influence the coordination of the network as a whole. Given this complexity, *coordination on different levels should be considered and analysed* in a transparent way: Who takes decisions? When? How? With whom? On which basis?

3. In order to ensure that each of the collaborating universities is willing and ready to support the joint initiative, several *key preconditions* need to be identified (cf. section B) and fulfilled before institutions reach the stage of issuing diplomas and certificates together. Trust between partner institutions will be enhanced through greater knowledge and understanding of specific features, profiles and strengths.

4. European cooperation should be *guided by curiosity and trust in what is different*. Common academic values do not imply a strict uniformity or mainstreaming of content or action. On the contrary, the culture of jointness builds on trust in and respect for different historical, cultural, geographical backgrounds and perspectives. The great challenge will be to maintain and enrich this wealth of cultural heritage and diversity in a coherently structured programme.

5. In order to ensure that difference becomes a strength and positive value of the programme, all partners involved should base their *cooperation on the principles of transparency and honesty.* Only if these principles are respected will the joint degree programme as a whole be stable and effective. It is the shared responsibility of all partners in the network to analyse strengths and weaknesses in order to identify necessary fields for change and improvement.

6. *Trustworthy communication between all partners* responsible for the joint degree programme has an impact on the attitude of each individual partner institution in the network. Each partner institution needs to analyse its own situation regularly in order to identify what might be relevant for the programme as a whole. This self-scrutiny on behalf of an inter-institutional activity is combined with a permanent dialogue with partners sharing the same aims. Joint seminars, conferences and regular meetings will also support the sense of jointness, and help each participating institution to contribute effectively to the overall programme.

7. A joint master programme will only be successful if all parties involved in its realisation are committed to shared aims and objectives and are able to develop a *sense of common ownership*. Partners need to define and agree on a number of issues that may in one cultural context seem self-evident, e.g., what they regard as success and failure.

8. Striving for a culture of jointness as a distinct feature of inter-institutional quality culture, all parties involved should be guided by *shared academic values*, which may be *expressed as a set of agreed quality principles*. A necessary precondition is the will to work together in an international context. This guiding principle of internationalisation (or Europeanisation) may, be supported at the university level by an institutional mission statement.

9. The organisation of a networked type of cooperation needs to be maintained at the same time as programme activities are sustained in each participating university. All aspects of this specific inter-institutional quality culture will benefit from a *broad involvement and participation of all relevant stakeholder groups*, notably students, academic and administrative staff as well as the senior leadership of the institutions.

10. Last but not least, in successful joint programmes the whole should be more than the sum of its parts. Assuring the quality of "the whole" is therefore necessarily different from assuring the quality of all parts by themselves. *Quality assurance should therefore be regarded as a shared and integrated responsibility of the network as well as a responsibility to be taken by each participating institution.* In order to embrace all crucial elements and features of the joint degree programme which arise "among" the participating institutions, all quality relevant criteria should be linked and considered in relation to the joint degree programme itself. A mere adding-up of the individual quality assurance activities taking place will not suffice. Likewise, activity only at the programme level will also be insufficient, since the joint programme is not an isolated self-sustaining activity, but depends on the individual contributions of each institution in the network.

B. FROM PLANNING TO ACTION

These Guidelines aim to provide a consistent reference system for all activities and actions related to the quality of programmes. Different challenges demand different solutions and decisions need to taken at different levels of institutions and networks. Thus the aims of this chapter are to outline some of the fundamental issues upon which reflection is essential and to encourage strategic reflection on how to develop an inter-institutional quality culture, with effective management of all elements of the joint master.

1. Shared Understanding

Effective communication is a critical factor to the successful development of the joint programme, and a range of *language issues* needs to be consciously addressed. All parties involved in the development or implementation of a joint master will need, as a matter of course, to find a shared language as a basis for communication and to outline and develop the curricular concept itself.

As linguistic and cultural diversity is a major potential added value of joint programmes, the choice of teaching language(s), as well as language(s) of study and teaching materials will need to be considered carefully.

More subtle linguistic issues with regard to the technical terms used when developing or implementing curricular concepts should also be taken into account. For example, as the Bologna Process has developed, different meanings of technical terms have emerged. There is no single legal definition of any particular term, and attempts to restrict the proliferation of meanings by introducing a binding glossary have failed to make any impact so far. However, a shared understanding of terminology within a joint master is essential. Therefore partners would be well advised to agree their own glossary in order to facilitate unhindered communication. Where differences in understanding and usage arise, a functional approach based on common policy objectives and practical outcomes is likely to be most successful. Thus terminology will simply be the medium between policy and outcomes and, as long as outcomes are common and agreed, terminology should not pose any barriers.

2. Decision Making and Levels of Responsibility

2.1 Decision Making

Identifying effective governance structures and forms of decision making in a joint degree programme is far from an easy task. Decision-making structures need to take into consideration the different institutional structures and cultures as well as the interests and functionality of all relevant institutional levels. Decision making should aim to be both efficient and effective, and decisions should be clearly communicated to everyone involved. Therefore the decision-making structures chosen for the quality management of a joint master must include clear strategies and communication policies (e.g., through flow charts).

2.2 Levels of Responsibility

While the joint degree programme itself is the result of a joint initiative of more than one institution, the levels of responsibility outlined below show where institutions will need to take action in order to accomplish a coherent and valid joint master:

- In terms of coordination and decision making for the programme: the **level of the network** provides the framework for the joint degree programme as a joint initiative, irrespective of whether it is a formal or a relatively informal networking structure.

- In terms of content and its implementation: responsibility rests at the **subject level** to be formed by representatives of those disciplines which will implement the joint degree programme. Coordination at this level is especially challenging when master level programmes show a stronger interdisciplinary approach.

In terms of sustainability and institutional anchoring: the level of the individual university (**institutional level**) contributes primarily to the development and implementation of the joint degree programme.

Level	Challenges and Actions (tasks)
Network	Effective coordination
Subject	Appropriate content
Institution	Sustainable institutional anchoring

Quality assurance measures also need to be co-ordinated *among* these three levels and depend on the cooperation and broad participation of all stakeholder groups. What are the specific challenges and the relevant tasks and who should fulfil these? The overall programme needs to be developed, validated and agreed upon by all partners involved. If this were not achieved, a joint master would resemble a patchwork of different ideas and approaches and the key quality criterion of coherence would be lost.

Each action at the different levels needs to be taken by an agent - a person in a defined position who is competent, trained and responsible. It might be useful for each partner institution to identify – at the initial stage – its "key agents" at each level. In deciding which person(s) to involve at which level, each institution should consider:

- the challenges to be addressed on each specific level (see table above);

- the duration, continuity and potential evolution of each task; and

- the composition of groups operating at each level with respect to the institutions involved in the joint master, the disciplines involved in the curricular development, the representative groups within a university (academics, students, administration, senior leadership) and the stakeholders from outside the university (representatives from the labour market, graduates, representatives from society).

It is of utmost importance to involve students in the working groups addressing the quality and quality assurance of joint masters. Programmes are designed for the benefit of students; hence students are the most important source of information on quality-related questions. Within joint programmes, students also play a major role in transporting information on both good and less good practice across Europe (and sometimes beyond). Therefore they should be encouraged to share their experience, knowledge and know-how for the enhancement of the programme's quality.

# C. QUALITY ASSURANCE FOR A JOINT MASTER PROGRAMME

In this chapter, the Guidelines present a generic approach to the quality of a joint degree programme that may be used for the purpose of quality assessment, assurance and enhancement. The aim is to achieve a joint master programme of good quality, and this implies that the cooperating partners need to share an understanding both of what "good quality" means and of the elements comprising it.

1. The Quality of a Joint Master Programme

As their starting point, the Guidelines follow a conception of quality as fitness for purpose, which includes the element of "fitness *of* purpose" – identification of valid objectives. Using the degree programme's declared objectives as a starting point, the quality of the programme will depend on the coherence and consistency of the concept. The degree to which the learning elements credibly contribute to achieving the required learning objectives ("fitness *for* purpose"), the coherence of implementation as well as the competence and capacity of the degree programme provider to assess, assure and enhance quality. A number of key questions should be posed in this context:

■ Have valid degree programme objectives (learning outcomes in terms of competences) been defined?

■ Is the degree programme as a whole, but also each individual degree course module, a suitable device to reach the objectives of the degree programme, i.e., is the curriculum coherent, target oriented and suitable?

■ Is a consistent and suitable implementation of the degree programme ensured and will there be appropriate and sufficient resources?

■ Will the fulfilment of the defined objectives be assessed?

■ Does improvement take place in order to eliminate errors and assure optimisation at all process stages?

These questions apply to any type of study programme, including joint degree programmes. Compared to study programmes being offered by a single institution, however, joint masters are characterised by their broad ambition and the complexity of their overall programme design[1]. Therefore, three additional elements should be considered:

aims → concept → implementation → monitoring

improvement

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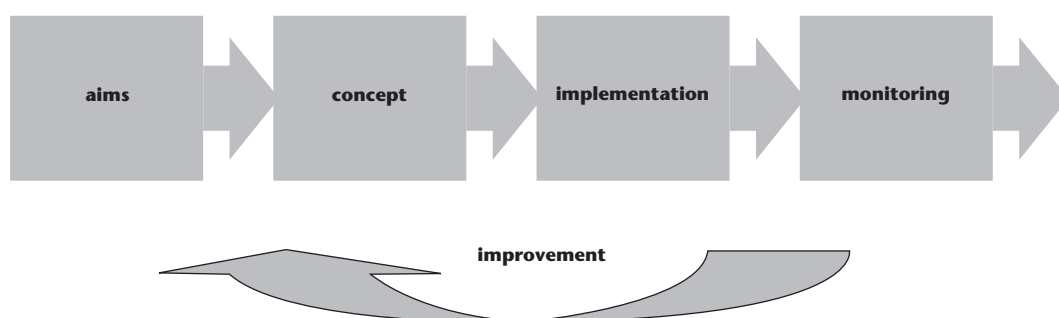
[1] *EUA Survey of Master Degrees and Joint Degrees in Europe,* by Christian Tauch and Andrejs Rauhvargers, September 2002.

■ The joint degree programme should be the only way of achieving the programme's objectives. Thus valid aims and objectives for a joint degree should always make this unique dimension provided by the joint degree programme explicit.

■ There are additional challenges of programme implementation in institutions in different countries. Different organisational cultures and values need to be balanced. In the joint master, all partners need to establish a common understanding of the correct level for master work. Questions related to the management of mobility and, with this, the social dimension should also be addressed in this context.

■ Recognition issues need to be solved.

All partners therefore need to have a common understanding of what a "master" degree is. This implies that for each joint master all partners will need to define:

■ the level of competences and the formal qualification to be achieved (where relevant, according to the respective National Qualifications Frameworks)

■ the number of ECTS credits to be achieved (according to the Bologna agreements this should be 90-120 ECTS credits and no less than 60 ECTS credits)

■ the duration of the course of studies (e.g., two years of full-time studies)

■ the specific entrance requirements

Thus "jointness" relates to both the programme and the institution and has legal implications. Compared to a regular study programme, the same set of quality-relevant questions should be posed. The difference lies not in the questions to be asked but in the nature of the responses given. Answers cannot be as linear and straightforward as in the case of single institution degree courses but rather must be characterised by coordination and consensus across the network.

2. Quality Assurance and Recognition

"If you want to develop a joint degree, does this imply that you can only involve institutions in countries legally able to award a joint degree?" While this question may be posed within many institutions considering the development of joint programmes, its importance can be exaggerated. Of course, those striving for a joint degree will need to pay careful attention to all regulatory frameworks of all participating institutions. Institutions striving for a joint cooperative programme as the realisation of a truly European experience will have to face also the legal impediments that currently exist. However, since the higher education ministers in all European countries have committed to removing legal obstacles, true joint degrees will most probably be achieved in the near future. In this phase of transition, double or multiple degree awards will be accepted since they follow the same aim as joint degrees.

The political discussion on the feasibility of joint degree programmes very much concentrates on the topic of recognition. However, the debate can be somewhat illusory as it does not specify the necessary prerequisite for recognition, i.e., trustworthy quality assurance processes and procedures: "Competent recognition authorities may make the recognition of joint degrees conditional on all parts of the study programme leading to the joint degree and/or the institutions providing the programme being subject to transparent quality assessment or being considered as belonging to the education system of one or more Parties to the Lisbon Recognition Convention."[2] Careful quality assurance of the joint master programme will provide the ground for broad recognition. Thus implementation of the guidelines can be considered as a common challenge for higher education institutions and national quality assurance systems.

[2] "Where the joint degree is issued on the basis of a curriculum developed by a group or consortium consisting of a number of recognised higher education institutions, recognition of the degree may be made contingent on all member institutions or programmes of the group or consortium being subject to transparent quality assessment, or being considered as belonging to the education system of one or more Parties to the Lisbon Recognition Convention, even if only some of these institutions provide courses for any given degree." Recommendation on the Recognition of Joint Degrees, UNESCO/Council of Europe (adopted by the Committee of the Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications of Higher Education in the European Region, June 2004).

D. QUALITY SITUATIONS IN PRACTICE

These Guidelines are addressed to two different quality situations: the planning and development of a new joint master programme is one, and the evaluation of a running joint master programme the other. This chapter examines the relationship between these situations from the point of view of quality enhancement and the nature of questions to be posed.

The process of thinking through quality assurance at the planning stage is closely related to the implementation of quality processes for an existing programme. Whereas the first stage focuses on planned activities and the necessary preconditions for their success, the second is concerned with an empirical validation of implementation and on factual achievements and success. The first is thus an "ex-ante" procedure requiring a sound "concept" and the second is an "ex-post" procedure validating the applied concept on the basis of empirical information and data.

The difference between both approaches lies in the formulation of arguments for validation:

■ For example, relevant questions at the planning stage include: How do we intend to organise the data administration for each student's Diploma Supplement? Why? Is this appropriate?

■ Questions of a running programme will be addressed on the basis of empirical evidence: Did it work? What were the specific obstacles? How can we improve the organisation of the Diploma Supplement? In this sense, the items outlined throughout the Guidelines are points of reference for each programme.

Before presenting the quality criteria and the associated questions, two separate processes for particular situations will be presented to indicate how internal quality assurance may be structured and organised. As stated before, these two processes follow the same logical construction, and it is the elements and questions of time, experience and perspective which result in procedural differences.

1.   Setting up a New Joint Degree Programme

The development of a new joint master or a joint degree programme implies a set of creative acts: It is not only the creation of a new and innovative curricular concept, but also the design of a new type of programme for which students are expected to move between different locations. This programme is designed with the purpose of providing a truly European study experience, fully integrated in the degree programme. Hence, organisational and structural links are developed when needed by the programme itself.

Each university collaborating in this network will usually need to cope with different and mostly divergent interests. In some respects the joint master will be competing with a large number of other degree programmes being offered by each university. Therefore it is especially important that each partner in the network will help to strengthen the collaboration and support the achievement of the joint aims and objectives.

In setting up a new joint master, the phase of forming a network of motivated and committed partners is of particular importance. The question of which institutions to include in the network needs to be answered by considering the aims and the purpose of the (planned) joint master programme. The question of which academic teachers and researchers to involve in the planning and realisation of the joint master is also of utmost interest. Therefore the phase of "matchmaking" or building a strong network will always correlate with the design of the joint master programme.

When planning a new joint master programme, early and thorough planning is recommended. The initiative will be completed in several steps.

In any case, the partners involved in the planning of the joint master programme shall express their **commitment to quality.** They are recommended to agree on their quality principles and concepts that they intend to apply. Their commitment to quality shall thus form a central element of any cooperative agreement.

Idea	Concept	Planning	Agreement	Doing

Step 1: IDEA

In phase 1, the idea of setting up a new joint master is being explored. The history of a new joint master usually starts with a moment of creative and innovative planning.

There are a set of crucial items which will be discussed in this very initial phase. This phase is in principle a brainstorming one. What do we want to do and why? What shall our joint programme focus upon? Who are "we", i.e., which researcher or academic teacher do we wish to include in this project? Which universities will fit on our (virtual) campus? Which group(s) of students do we bear in mind when we think of our envisaged programme? What will be the benefits of such a joint initiative? How do students/institutions/employers/society benefit? What is new? Why is this idea unique? etc. By exploring the idea of setting up a new joint master programme, all those involved in this phase have the possibility to collect different opinions and a broad input for the further development of the joint master.

In the initial planning phase the partners should be aware of their reasons for working together. Which institutions attempt to work together in the joint master and why? There might be different reasons such as (1) personal reasons, (2) rational choice or, (3) systematic matchmaking. These reasons will also be affected by the interface with the university's international mission, as well as by support to such activities through the institutional infrastructure, such as an international office.

Before setting up a joint degree programme, the collaborating partners may wish to conduct some form of needs analysis, to see whether there is interest in the specific qualification offered – both from the students' perspective and the labour market. Such a needs analysis can provide information for rational choice regarding the content of the programme and the selection of partner institutions.

Collective brainstorming is an important exercise which prepares the network for a joint degree programme. All those involved in this exercise have the possibility to learn the opinions and approaches of others regarding the creation of an innovative programme. In the initial phase, some systematic data collection could be useful. Therefore sufficient time needs to be foreseen for the first analysis of the programme's outline and context.

By the end of the planning phase, partners should be in a position to demonstrate their commitment to the programme. Such a commitment should also be to the quality principles and concepts that have been agreed and will help to bind the network together.

Step 2: CONCEPT – outline

Based on the outcomes of the brainstorming on the aims, a working group may develop the outline of a concept for the joint degree programme.

The outline of the concept shall entail the basic structural and organisational information on the joint degree programme. The concept will be the basis for the following steps in the planning and implementation of the joint master programme. An outline should at least entail the following information:
- name of joint degree programme
- aims and objectives of the joint degree programme
- discipline/s involved

- level (Bachelor/Master/PhD)
- duration (in years/in ECTS credits)
- full time/part time
- institutions offering elements of the joint degree programme (including their motivation)
- entrance requirements
- regulatory framework (on state level; on institutional level)
- benefits and costs
- mandatory student mobility
- envisaged measures of quality assurance: quality principles and quality measures
- funding
- legal implications (e.g., copyright of material that has been developed, which can become an issue if the programme is dismantled later)

Step 3: PLANNING – in detail

Once the basic outline of the joint degree programme's concept has been agreed upon by all partners, the detailed planning of the joint degree course will begin. In the detailed planning, the individual contributions and organisational arrangements of each partner university will be specified. Therefore, the partners involved may wish to describe the individual contributions in a more bottom-up approach. Section E of these Guidelines may serve as a common orientation for each university.

The organisation of the programme should also be reflected upon during this phase. Will there be a central, professional and institutionalised coordination? How will communication and cooperation on the network level be organised? Who will represent the respective universities in the coordinating body? How do the members of the coordinating body ensure coordination and communication with decision-making bodies of each university? etc.

The outcomes of the planned individual contributions of each participating university should then be analysed at the network level (e.g., a written agreement). In this way, all partners have the opportunity to get more familiar with the specific approaches to teaching and learning across the network as well as understanding the planned practical implementation of the programme in each respective institution.

Step 4: AGREEMENT

The programme concept shall be agreed by all partners involved - both the programme providers (on the subject level) as well as the institutional leaders. The programme concept is thus part of a formal agreement and can therefore give orientation to all parties. The institutional leaders should sign a memorandum of intent or a formal contract in order to demonstrate their commitment and confirm their support to the joint project.

Step 5: DOING the programme

Now it is time to get the programme going. This includes the implementation of the planned quality assurance measures.

2. Evaluation of a Running Joint Degree Programme

The providers of a joint master or a joint degree programme are recommended to evaluate their joint endeavour with regard to its quality on a cyclical basis. The purpose of an evaluation may be to get a shared, analytical understanding of the programme's current strengths and weaknesses as well as to identify necessary areas and measures for improvement. Those involved in the evaluation procedure can make use of section E of these Guidelines.

Commitment	Outline aims Concept	Self-Evaluation	Joint Anlysis	Improving

Step 1: COMMITMENT to quality

The path to quality culture embracing a culture of jointness shall start with a statement by all partners on all levels that demonstrates their commitment to quality and clarifies the quality principles and concepts which will be binding for the network.

In order to support the necessary coordination of a joint master programme in a quality assured way, it will be helpful to re-visit and question the conceptual assumptions regarding quality and quality assurance in light of practical experience:

■ The joint definition of quality – a concept of quality as fitness of purpose/fitness for purpose?

■ The agreement to strive jointly for a quality culture, i.e., the agreement:

- to share responsibility for the quality of the joint master programme;

- on quality criteria (e.g., based on elements of these Guidelines);

- on a coordinated procedure for the application of these quality criteria;

- joint responsibility for the enhancement of quality as demonstrated through self-evaluations;

- etc.

Step 2: Revisiting the OUTLINE, AIMS and CONCEPT of the joint master

Each joint master pursues specific aims which are decisive for the programme's concept in terms of both content and implementation.

An agreed outline of the programme's aims and objectives describes its concept and its implementation. The outline includes information such as the programme's duration in terms of ECTS credits, years, the programme's level, the degree to be awarded, mobility phases, learning outcomes and curricular concept. The relevant questions can be derived from section E of these Guidelines. It will be important to ensure that the documentation of the programme's aims and concept are complete and up-to-date. The documentation should be updated on the basis of the empirical experience and feedback received during the running phase of the programme. Moreover, it will be important to ensure the knowledge and awareness of these curricular concepts among all partners.

Step 3: Bottom-up SELF EVALUATION

The joint master's quality very much depends on a well-tuned cooperation of different partners. In order to analyse the individual specificities, similarities and differences in perception, concept and implementation, all partners should be involved in a bottom-up self-evaluation process.

Each university collaborating in the joint degree programme conducts a self-evaluation on the basis of the set of questions provided in section E. The university is asked to describe to what extent these aspects of the guidelines are considered in implementing the programme, in accordance with the different institutional circumstances, intentions and possibilities. Alternatively, they are asked to justify why they were not included or implemented. The guidelines should not be seen as rigid and prescriptive, but rather as a flexible handbook of questions. Irrelevant points should be omitted and special features of the course which are not included adequately through the questions should be described.

The self-evaluation shall be based on an in-depth SWOT analysis, which should embrace both a description of the programme and its implementation, as well as an analysis of the specific strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the programme in each institutional context.

The partners collaborating in the joint master are recommended to agree on a common format for a self-evaluation report. It will also be helpful if the partners substantiate their self-descriptions by providing similar evidence for their statements (i.e., statistical data, policies, etc.).

Step 5: JOINT ANALYSIS of contributions and SPECIFIC FOCUS of INTEREST

The coordination of the joint master will benefit from a jointly conducted analysis of the specific contributions of each individual partner in the network. By conducting a self-evaluation of the joint degree through a decentralised approach and by analysing the results of this self-evaluation on a central level, all partners have the opportunity to gain more familiarity with all aspects of teaching and learning and the practical implementation of the programme.

The joint analysis of the self-evaluation reports will benefit from a clear set of procedural rules. It will be important to follow the principles underlying the concept of "culture of jointness". Respect, honesty, trust and shared responsibility will enable all partners involved to achieve their common aims and objectives.

Step 6: Drafting an ACTION PLAN FOR IMPROVEMENT

On the basis of the compilation of self-evaluation reports and their comparative analysis, the collaborating partners will undertake to identify the need for changes in the programme's concept and its implementation and they will develop a joint action plan which embraces necessary actions, priorities and a clarification of responsibilities.

These issues will need to be scrutinised on a regular basis in order to ensure that all parties involved in the programme will contribute to improving it in a coherent and regular way. Furthermore, the action plan shall specifically include information on the quality assurance processes which the individual partners set in place for their contributions.

Example of a draft action plan for improvement

Challenge	Activity	Responsibility
1. Student admission	1.1 Setting up an admission committee 1.2 Assuring compliance with a range of national laws	1.1 Network level 1.2 Institution
2. Recognition of the joint degree	2. Negotiations with the Ministry, if applicable	2. Institution/Rector's level
3. Implementation of the curricular plan	3. Creating a learning and teaching environment which fits the agreed set of course objectives	3. Subject level
4. Equal access to university facilities	4. Providing immediate access to facilities for students visiting the university for a short-term period	4. Institution

3. An External Evaluation to Validate the Outcomes of the Self-evaluation

What are the results of this decentralised self-evaluation followed by a coordinated analysis of the outcomes of the self-evaluation plus the joint agreement on necessary steps?

Any network which answers all questions listed in section E of these Guidelines will be able to demonstrate the following:

■ The network provides a collection of systematic data and information which are relevant for the joint master as a joint initiative and sheds light on the contributions of the different partners cooperating in the network.

■ The network has a description of its joint programme's concept, which is based on evidence.

■ The network demonstrates that the realisation of its joint master is being monitored in a joint way.

■ Founding its self-evaluation exercise on an in-depth SWOT-analysis, i.e., an analysis of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the joint degree programme, the network demonstrates a joint awareness of the problems and challenges as well as the future perspective of the specific joint degree.

■ Hence, the network is in a position to control the further development of the joint degree programme, assure and monitor its quality and improve it.

As a possible next step, the joint master may wish to have all information gained through the self-evaluation validated by means of an external evaluation.[3] Especially the external evaluation of the management and coordination on the network level or the interrelation between the institutional level and the network level may be subject to an assessment. Moreover, there might be the request from national framework regulations or legislation for an external evaluation.

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[3]   "Use of internal quality assurance procedures: External quality assurance procedures should take into account the effectiveness of the internal quality assurance processes described in Part 1 of the European Standards and Guidelines." Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area, ENQA (adopted by European Ministers of Education, Bergen, May 2005).

E. QUALITY-RELATED QUESTIONS

This chapter introduces a range of questions that should be addressed by all those who are responsible for the quality of joint programmes – at both the institutional and the joint programme level. The list is by no means exhaustive or prescriptive: questions will need to be adapted to suit the particularities of each programme.

The definitions of quality as "fitness of purpose" and "fitness for purpose" translate into a set of quality criteria that need to be met by the joint master. In accordance with the principle of institutional autonomy, there is no restrictive definition of how the universities involved in the joint master are to accomplish this. It is their responsibility to find an adequate solution. This explains why the quality criteria are defined in quite an abstract way. They are to be read as guiding principles. The Guidelines provide in addition a set of quality-related questions, i.e., reference points, which demonstrate in more detail how the quality criteria are to be understood.

The criteria and quality-related questions follow an institutional process orientation for the implementation of programme quality. By interrelating the elements of a quality cycle – (valid) objectives, (fitting) concept, (true) implementation, (candid) quality monitoring, (timely) improvement – they support a relational quality concept. This concept avoids external standardisation of the programme's content. Rather, they support the universities' uniqueness and their power for innovation.

The criteria address all levels involved in realising effectively and efficiently a joint master: these are the level of the university (institutional level), the subject (disciplines) within each university, and the network of universities providing the joint master. All levels should participate actively in the realisation of the joint degree programme in order to assure and improve the quality of such a complex initiative. Their cooperation shall be carefully coordinated in order to enhance commitment and a sense of ownership while keeping to a limit the necessary resources (especially in terms of human resources and work). Ideally, the quality approach

proposed for the joint master should be complementary to any existing processes in the partner institutions.

All parties involved in the joint master are invited to consider the question "How do we ensure the joint master's quality?" Since quality is a complex issue, all parties involved should go through the full list of questions presented in the following list. In order to come to an agreed and coordinated answer, shared by everybody involved, there is a need for analysing different opinions and expectations. It is important to be aware of the degree of heterogeneity in the network; even more important is the negotiation and agreement on a joint form of activity. As indicated above, both negotiation and agreement will lead to an integration of different approaches. The self-evaluation of each institution involved in the joint master may read differently from those done by the participating partners. It is a necessary step to carefully analyse the individual contributions[4] and to view the differences as a great learning opportunity for everyone involved.

1. Aims and Objectives

CRITERIA:

How do we ensure that the joint master's objectives are explicit, adequate and plausible?

How do we ensure that they are valid?

How do we ensure that they are shared – both among all participating universities providing elements of the joint degree programme and among all persons involved (quality culture)?

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4 "Information systems: Institutions should ensure that they collect, analyse and use relevant information for the effective management of their programmes of studies and other activities." (Part 1: Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area, ENQA (adopted by European Ministers of Education, Bergen, May 2005).

1. Programme Development: Objectives

1.1 Objectives of the joint master

- What objectives does the joint master pursue with respect to academic values, democratic citizenship, societal relevance, in particular employability, and the personal development of the students?

- What specific competences, abilities, skills and knowledge are to be gained by the students (learning outcomes of the joint degree programme)? How do the institutions perceive the level of competences which the joint master degree will pursue? Is this level in compliance with the respective national qualifications framework?

- In what ways do the programme's objectives require a joint degree? How do the participating universities define the "jointness" of the programme and its realisation?

- What are the linguistic aims of the joint master and the specific language policy?

1.2 Institutional aims (regarding the individual university)

- Is the joint master part of the institutional mission? What connection is there between the joint master and other degree programmes offered by the associated departments and/or university?

- What were the primary reasons for introducing the joint master: academic, professional, organisational, financial or others?

1.3 Institutional aims (with a view to the participating universities)

- What were the primary reasons for selecting the participating universities: academic, professional, organisational, regional, linguistic, financial, others? Were these selection criteria appropriate for achieving the programme's aims and objectives?

1.4 Other objectives or, if applicable, constraints

- How do the participating partners ensure that all legal stipulations are fulfilled? How do they ensure that the joint master degree will be recognised – academically, legally and professionally?

- How do the participating partners cope with specific legal constraints regarding the establishment of a joint degree?

1.5 Validity of the aims and objectives (reasons for the objectives described in 1.1 to 1.4 above)

- How do the participating partners validate the joint master's aims and objectives?

- What level of demand is demonstrated through student applications and the labour market? Was a need analysis or market research performed? Has it been updated?

- Are professionals involved in developing the joint degree programme? What contacts are there with the profession and the labour market and what are the links with society and industry?

2. Concept

CRITERIA:

How do we ensure that the curriculum will achieve the stated objectives?

How do we ensure that the joint master's curriculum is coherent and consistent?

How do we ensure that the concept is feasible for students as well as for the institutions?

2.1 Target group / Addressees / Admission requirements

- Does the admission policy achieve the set objectives? What are the entrance requirements and selection criteria? What specific skills, abilities and knowledge are required, especially linguistic abilities? How does the university ensure diversity, i.e., access for students from different backgrounds? How does the institution ensure a need-blind admission?

- What is the planned number of places for the joint master in total/in each institution/for each year; the expected number of first year students, undergraduates, and postgraduates in each participating institution? What is the admission yield (i.e., the applications/admissions ratio)? Do these achieve the set objectives?

- What are the expected and achieved flows of mobility?

- Do the participating institutions reach their targets?

2.2 Course structure

- Does the content of the study plan satisfy the set objectives? What is the structure of the joint degree course and the teaching practices regarding time and content? Does the joint master enable all students to have equivalent learning opportunities?

- How are the periods spent abroad specified in the joint master and how are they structured?

2.3 Learning outcomes, ECTS, modular structure

- To what extent is the joint master structured/modularised? What are the expected learning outcomes in the context of the joint master's objectives (core and transferable skills and knowledge, social competence and personal development)?

- Does the joint master meet the requirements of ECTS in respect of the defined learning objectives (learning outcomes) and the workload of students? How is the expected student workload quantified?

2.4 Assessment and examination system

- How is the examination system structured? Is it cumulative or is there an all-encompassing final examination? What kinds of controls and proofs of achievement are there?

- How do the examinations enable students to demonstrate that they have achieved the learning objectives?

- Which grading schemes are used? How is consistency of grading ensured across the partner institutions?

- What happens if a student fails an exam and is due to move to another institution? Can students carry a fail and move? Can they take a supplement at another institution?

2.5 Learning context (didactics, methodology, learning and teaching materials)

- What forms and methods of teaching are used (lectures, seminars, exercises, projects, directed independent study) to ensure that graduates are equipped with adequate competence for the professions in their speciality areas? Are the selected types of teaching practices suited to achieve the set objectives?

- What is the (major) language of instruction?

2.6 Transparency

- **Diploma:** Is there a certification that the degree awarded is "joint"?

- **Diploma Supplement:** Is there a Diploma Supplement? How is it structured? In which language is it provided?

- **Transcript of records:** Is there a transcript of records? How is it structured? Which institution issues an overall transcript of final records?

- **ECTS course catalogue:** Is there an ECTS course catalogue? How is it structured?

- **Examination rules:** How are the assessment criteria rendered transparent? Does the joint master have set examination rules? Are assessments carried out in a consistent manner by all partners?

- **Student information and advisory service:** What possibilities and materials are there for students to obtain the relevant information? Is there an individualised student support and advisory system providing targeted information for both prospective and current students (Information, website, faculty advisory service, regular office hours, support through tutorials, etc.)?

3. Programme Implementation: Tools

CRITERIA:

How do we ensure that the decision-making processes both on the network level and in each university are appropriate for achieving the joint master's objectives?

How do we ensure that the resources are available and appropriate to achieve the objectives in all universities involved in the joint master?

3.1 Decision-making processes

- Is the organisation of the joint master clearly defined and appropriate at both the university and the network level? What are the responsibilities and decision-making structures within the faculty, the university and the network? Is there a leading university?

- How are network-level decisions integrated into the regular decision-making processes of the university (institutional anchoring)?

- How are the inter-institutional bodies organised? What is their mandate? How often and how regular do they meet? Who are the members of these bodies?

- Do students participate in shaping the joint master (decision making) at university and network level?

3.2 Organisation

- Is there a professional and institutionalised co-ordinating body in the network and in each institution?

- How is communication organised in the network?

- To what extent are joint projects, conferences and other events with the partner institutions or with other institutions undertaken?

- How does the organisation ensure equal opportunities for students enrolled in the joint master, e.g., equal access to university facilities (library, computers, etc.)?

- How are the mandatory mobility phases organised within the joint master?

3.3 Resources (financial, staff, infrastructure, mobility grants, etc.)

- Is the funding of the joint master assured (at network level and at the level of each individual university)? Are the resources required in order to meet objectives available (at network level and at the level of each individual university)?

- How are funding issues addressed? Is the cost per student known? Does each partner receive equitable treatment in terms of the return on their investment?

3.4 Staff

- Does the programme have sufficient administrative, technical and other staff in each university? How many and what positions are there for teachers (including guest professorships, lecturers as well as services between the various faculties) in general/for the joint master? What is the teacher/student ratio? What are the benefits for staff (i.e., why do they do it?)

- Do the qualifications of the academic staff fit the programme's profile and content? What are the qualifications of the academic staff? Are qualification profiles available? Are academic staff members also active in research or in artistic/design development? What international experience do academic staff members have?

- What are the policies and practices for staff mobility in the joint master?

- What regulations are there for administrative and academic staff with regard to supporting the joint degree?

- How is the linguistic ability of academic and administrative staff ensured with respect to the main language of the joint master?

3.5 Financial resources, physical resources and infrastructure

- What equipment, teaching and financial resources are available to the joint master? Is the current budget sufficient?

- Are mobility grants available for joint degree students and for staff involved in this programme?

- What costs do the students have to cover (e.g., tuition fees, housing)?

- Does the university provide assistance with student housing? In what way? Are there arrangements for short-term (3 months) accommodation?

3.6 Administration

- How does the university administration support the joint master?

- How is the enrolment of students organised?

- How is the examination administration organised for the transcript of records and the Diploma Supplement?

- How is the appeal system organised? In which institution may students appeal final results?

3.7 Organisation of admissions and transitions

- How is student admission organised (which panel is responsible for this)? What rules does the procedure follow? Are the entrance criteria to the course defined and documented? Do they follow a transparent procedure? Is the admission procedure coherent across all participating institutions?

- Are "bridging classes" organised for foreign students, first year students, or students who are new to the subject (in order to level the playing field, especially in terms of language skills)?

- To what extent do the faculty/the university/the network support the graduates in their search for suitable employment? Is there a careers service? Are contacts to former graduates organised, and if so, how (e.g., alumni association)?

4. Quality Assessment

CRITERIA:

How do we ensure that the achievement of the joint master's objectives will be assessed systematically at all levels involved?

- Does the joint master have a quality policy? Does it have a quality management system (e.g., record of study data, feedback and follow-up mechanisms for the development of study plans, selection of staff, student admission modalities, evaluation of teaching, feedback from the labour market)?

- Is there an evaluation of the success of the joint degree course? (e.g., graduation rate, studies of where graduates live/work, amount of time spent looking for jobs, income, career analyses). Are these updated regularly? Are surveys carried out among both students and teachers?

- Are there mechanisms for the systematic development of the joint degree programme?

- What measures are taken to remedy high drop-out rates, unsatisfactory graduate analyses or unsatisfactory average grades? Has the programme undertaken an external evaluation?

- What is the students' input into the quality assurance processes? How does the university ensure a participatory student feedback and a systematic follow-up?

5. Improvement and Enhancement: Programme Sustainability

CRITERIA:

How does the university ensure its steering capacity with regard to setting objectives, conceptualisation and implementation of the joint degree programme?

How does the university ensure its capacity for change?

How does it set priorities and how does it handle various joint degree programmes?

etc.

- To what extent does the programme use the results of its internal evaluations in order to improve?

- Is there a list of priorities concerning necessary changes? What measures are taken to improve

■ the joint master programme per se (content)

■ the coherence inside the network

■ support by the home institution

■ etc.

- Which committee makes decisions about proposed changes – at university and network level?

F. FROM POINTS OF REFERENCE TO POINTS OF CONCERN

This final chapter highlights issues which are likely to be of particular concern to all joint masters. It illustrates how a systematic approach to these matters can help address issues which remain major challenges to the successful development of joint master programmes throughout Europe.

The list of questions in section E demonstrates the complexity of a joint master's evaluation and provides a structured way for addressing a range of issues, four of which – the particularly challenging ones – are addressed below.

Mobility

The systematic mobility of students and staff is one of the key features of a joint master[5]. There are a set of challenges that need to be addressed in order to facilitate a broad and fair mobility. These challenges - which can be viewed often as constraints, particularly when it comes to funding - will need to be addressed systematically:

Aims and objectives

■ What are our objectives in terms of mobility? How many students should be mobile, and what are the expected mobility flows?

Concept

■ How are the phases of mobility conceptualised and integrated in the curriculum?

■ What is required for automatic recognition of study periods spent at partner institutions?

Implementation

■ How do we organise and facilitate mobility? Which mobility grants are available? How can we best organise services for mobile students (accommodation, access to facilities, computers, libraries, other student services, etc.)?

Monitoring

■ How do we monitor the effectiveness of mobility? Which feedback loops have we implemented in order to receive feedback both from mobile students and partner institutions?

Improvement

■ How do we plan to improve the organisation of mobility?

Finances and Fees

The management of finances and fees of joint masters is closely linked to the issue of feasibility. Indeed the question of programme costs needs to be examined from the point of view of costs to the institutions and costs to students.

The students' economic situation and the aim of equal opportunities regarding access to higher education is one action-line which receives constant interest in the Bologna Process[6]. In a cooperative network where different kinds of financial traditions, policies and practices meet, coordination needs to be especially thought through.

The first step includes creating transparency about each partner's requirements, such as for example mandatory tuition fees. A comparison and integration of these will make the points of concern transparent. What is our financial policy? Shall the students carry the tuition fees of their home institutions abroad? Or shall they adopt the system of the respective institution? How can we prevent costs (tuition and housing) to be the decisive criteria for the mobility choice? How will the university in the most costly system cope with this situation? Has our financial policy proved successful?

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[5] In the Bergen Communiqué, the European Ministers for higher education stressed the importance of mobility for the accomplishment of the European Higher Education Area: "We recognise that mobility of students and staff among all participating countries remains one of the key objectives of the Bologna Process. Aware of the many remaining challenges to be overcome, we reconfirm our commitment to facilitate the portability of grants and loans where appropriate through joint action, with a view to making mobility within the EHEA a reality. We shall intensify our efforts to lift obstacles to mobility by facilitating the delivery of visa and work permits and by encouraging participation in mobility programmes. We urge institutions and students to make full use of mobility programmes, advocating full recognition of study periods abroad within such programmes." (Bergen Communiqué, 2005)

[6] "The social dimension is a constituent part of the EHEA and a necessary condition for the attractiveness and competitiveness of the EHEA. We therefore renew our commitment to making quality higher education equally accessible to all, and stress the need for appropriate conditions for students so that they can complete their studies without obstacles related to their social and economic background…" (Bergen Communiqué, 2005)

How can we improve it? In addition, the network partners are advised to ask themselves whether they experience some sort of "jurisdictional competition", i.e., students do not enrol in their home country but in the one with lowest fees or highest grants. Does this problem affect the joint degree? If so, a requirement to enrol in one's own country could be at least raised in order to avoid discrimination. Can the overall funding system be rationalised to overcome the problem? These important questions should be raised in the initial stages of a new joint master.

Language Issues and Language Support

The appropriate language policy is of utmost importance for the good implementation of a joint master. The attractive feature of joint masters lies in their international outlook. Students are placed in a situation where they are expected to be mobile and have the great opportunity to study in at least two different national systems of higher education within a short period of time. If joint degree programmes aim at achieving a "true" European dimension, they should embrace the rich cultural heritage of the European Higher Education Area and hence its linguistic diversity. The heterogeneity of Europe implies a rich linguistic heritage which may be uncovered in the course of a joint master. The language issue may easily become a decisive criterion for the flows of mobility and there are good reasons to offer courses in both the teaching language and the local language. The first will improve the quality of the programme and the second the overall European experience.

Aims and objectives

■ What are the linguistic aims of the joint master? What is the specific language policy?

Concept

■ What are the expected linguistic entrance requirements?

■ Which is the (major) language of instruction?

Implementation

■ Are "bridging events" organised for foreign students, for first year students, or for students who are new to the subject (to level the playing field, especially in terms of language skills)?

Monitoring and improvement

■ Do we achieve our set linguistic objectives? What do we do in order to improve?

Managing Life: Logistics

The number of issues which could be outlined here is unlimited, and hence no list is provided. It depends on the specific needs of each joint master programme as to where partners may wish to devote their energy.

The main point, however, which all partners should realise when entering into a joint programme network, is that the complex nature of these programmes guarantees a major workload in terms of logistical management. It is, of course, the joint responsibility of all parties involved to ensure effective management and to further enhance the quality of their joint initiative.

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