



Joint European Degree Label -Pilot

External review report

Programme: Joint Master programme in Marine Biotechnology
(EUCONEXUS)

Institutions

- Universidad Católica de Valencia San Vicente Mártir, Spain
- Université de La Rochelle, France
- Agricultural University of Athens, Greece
- Universitatea Tehnica de Constructii Bucuresti, Romania
- Klaipėdos Universitetas, Lithuania
- Sveučilište u Zadru, Croatia

Date of the evaluation: 25/06/2026

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS	2
GLOSSARY	4
INTRODUCTION	5
ASSESSMENT CRITERIA	8
DIMENSION A: PROGRAMME ORGANISATION CRITERIA	8
A.1: Higher education institutions involved ●	8
A.2: Transnational joint degree delivery	9
A.2.1: Joint design and delivery ●	9
A.2.2: Joint degree ●	9
A.2.3: Joint Diploma Supplement ●	10
A.2.4: Use of ECTS Users' Guide ●	11
A.3: Joint arrangements for the joint programme ●	11
A.4: Quality assurance arrangements	12
A.4.1: Internal and external quality assurance ●	12
A.4.2: European approach ●	13
A.5: Graduate tracking ○	13
A.6: Student-centred learning ●	14
A.7: Transnational campus – access to services ●	15
A.8: Flexible and embedded student mobility	16
A.8.1: 30 ECTS physical mobility ●	16
A.8.2: Six months physical mobility ●	17
A.9: Co-evaluation and co-supervision for dissertations ○	17
DIMENSION B: EUROPEAN DIMENSION CRITERIA	19
B1: Interdisciplinarity and research-based learning ○	19
B2: Opportunities for learning beyond academia and employability ●	20
B3: Digitalisation ○	21

B4: Values ○	22
B5: Multilingualism ○	23
B.6: Inclusiveness	24
B.6.1: Diversity, equality, inclusion ○	24
B.6.2: European Charter for Researchers ○	25
B7: Environmental sustainability ○	26
RESULT	28
Summary of the assessment	28
Summary of enhancement areas	29
Summary of recommendations	30
ANNEX 1	33
List of evidence provided	33

GLOSSARY

AQU	Catalan University Quality Assurance Agency / AQU Catalunya
DEQAR	Database of External Quality Assurance Results
ECTS	European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System
EDL	European Degree Label
EHEA	European Higher Education Area
EQAR	European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education
EQF	European Qualifications Framework
ESG	Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area
EU	European Union
EU-CONEXUS	European University for Smart Urban Coastal Sustainability
Hcéres	High Council for the Evaluation of Research and Higher Education, French quality assurance and evaluation agency
HEI	Higher education institution
IQP	Internal Quality Procedure
JMPMB	Joint Master Programme in Marine Biotechnology
EQF	European Qualifications Framework
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
QA	Quality assurance
R&D	Research and development
UCV	Universidad Católica de Valencia San Vicente Mártir
UNESCO/CEPES	UNESCO European Centre for Higher Education
UTCB	Universitatea Tehnica de Constructii Bucuresti

INTRODUCTION

The Joint European Degree Label is a European quality label awarded to joint programmes delivered through transnational cooperation between higher education institutions from different countries, with the aim of promoting compliance with European standards and recognising the European dimension of such programmes.

This report results from the evaluation conducted by an external panel of experts on Joint Master programme in Marine Biotechnology, which is applying to obtain the Joint European Degree Label. The programme was previously assessed as a joint programme by HCERES in 2021, and the corresponding evaluation report is publicly available in the Database of External Quality Assurance Results (DEQAR).

The present evaluation constitutes an experimental pilot application of the recently adopted Operational Guide for the Joint European Degree Label (Publications Office of the European Union, 2026). It is also aligned with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG), the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes, and relevant Bologna tools.

The programme under evaluation is a master's programme (EQF level 7). Consequently, criteria specifically applicable to doctoral programmes have not been considered in this assessment.

This evaluation does not constitute a full accreditation procedure. Instead, it builds on the previous positive evaluation conducted under the European Approach. In accordance with the principle of non-duplication established in the Operational Guide, criteria already fully addressed in that framework have not been reassessed. The present evaluation focuses on criteria that are either partially covered or not addressed in the European Approach, i.e. those reflecting the specific added value of the Joint European Degree Label.

Basic information of the programme proposal reviewed

Full name: Joint Master programme in Marine Biotechnology

EQF level: second cycle (NQF 7)

Degrees awarded: Master's Degree in Marine Biotechnology

ECTS: 120

Panel composition

Chair:

Ninoslav Šćukanec Schmidt - Institute for the Development of Education, Croatia

Academic:

Cristina Churrua Muguruza – University of Deusto Spain

Student:

Nadia Manzoni - Central European University, Austria

Secretary:

Carme Edo - AQU Catalunya

Methodology and evidence reviewed

The evaluation was conducted in line with the methodology defined in the Operational Guide for the Joint European Degree Label (2026).

The panel reviewed the following documentation:

- Self-evaluation report submitted by the programme consortium
- Previous evaluation report under the European Approach (HCERES, [2021])
- JMPMB Agreement / Consortium Agreement
- Additional evidence provided specifically for the Joint European Degree Label (Annex I shows the list of the evidence provided)

Assessment Approach

In accordance with the Operational Guide, the panel applied a differentiated assessment approach:

- Criteria fully addressed under the European Approach ● → not reassessed
- Criteria partially addressed ◐ → complementary analysis conducted
- Criteria not addressed ○ → fully assessed
- Criteria not applicable → explicitly identified (e.g. doctoral-level criteria)

This approach ensured coherence with prior evaluations while focusing on the specific requirements of the Joint European Degree Label.

For each criterion, the report includes an assessment based on evidence and objective data. Where relevant, the report also includes the following elements:

Enhancement areas: Shortcomings detected that must be resolved within a maximum period of three years. While significant, they are not serious enough to result in a non-compliant judgement. These may be subject to appeal by the university. >

Recommendations: Suggestions aimed at promoting the enhancement of the joint programme. Implementation of recommendations is not mandatory. These are not subject to appeal by the university.

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

DIMENSION A: PROGRAMME ORGANISATION CRITERIA

A.1: Higher education institutions involved ⓘ

The joint programme is offered by at least two higher education institutions from at least two different Member States.

Assessment

The Joint Master Programme in Marine Biotechnology is offered by a transnational consortium involving higher education institutions from six EU Member States. Five consortium institutions are degree-awarding higher education institutions recognised in their respective national systems, while one additional university participates in the design and delivery of the programme in a non-degree-awarding role. Universitatea Tehnica de Constructii Bucuresti (UTCB, Romania) was not a joint degree-awarding institution at the time of the 2021 evaluation due to national legal restrictions, but was confirmed as a full partner contributing to the design and delivery of the programme.

The previous European Approach evaluation confirmed that the partner institutions are recognised higher education institutions and that the relevant legal frameworks enable their participation in the joint programme. The programme therefore clearly exceeds the minimum requirement of being offered by at least two higher education institutions from at least two different Member States.

Compliance: Yes

Enhancement area

- Clarify and document the role of Universitatea Tehnica de Constructii Bucuresti (UTCB) as a non-degree-awarding consortium partner. In line with the Operational Guide, non-degree-awarding higher education institutions may contribute to the delivery of a joint programme, for example through teaching, mobility placements, research facilities or other programme activities, however they may not award additional national degrees in addition to the joint degree. Therefore, the evidence should clearly specify UTCB's functions within the joint programme consortium.

The consortium should therefore clarify how UTCB contributes to programme delivery, mobility, teaching, supervision, research facilities, student services, governance and quality assurance, as applicable. It should also explain how activities carried out at or through UTCB are covered by the joint programme arrangements and how the experience of students undertaking mobility, research or other programme activities at UTCB is integrated into the joint programme.

Finally, the consortium should clarify how UTCB's non-degree-awarding role is communicated to students, given that UTCB does not co-award the joint degree and would therefore not be listed as a degree-awarding institution in the joint diploma or Diploma Supplement, nor in the Joint European Degree Label certificate.

A.2: Transnational joint degree delivery

A.2.1: Joint design and delivery ●

The joint programme is jointly designed and jointly delivered by all the HEIs involved.

Assessment

This criterion is fully addressed by a European Approach evaluation, no additional assessment is needed under the Joint European Degree Label.

Compliance: Yes

A.2.2: Joint degree ①

The joint programme leads to the award of a joint degree.

Assessment

The evidence confirms that the joint programme leads to the award of a joint Master's degree in Marine Biotechnology. The Cooperation Agreement sets out the degree-awarding procedures and confirms that Universidad Católica de Valencia (UCV) issues and registers the joint degree and the joint Diploma Supplement on behalf of the consortium. The earlier European Approach evaluation confirmed the existence of degree-

awarding arrangements and identified the need for further clarification of some diploma-related aspects. The current evidence demonstrates that these arrangements have been implemented in practice.

The Student Agreement, Student Toolkit and the provided example of an (anonymised) joint diploma confirm that successful graduates receive an official joint degree corresponding to 120 ECTS, issued in recognition of completion of the joint programme requirements. The Student Agreement states that students are awarded the joint Master's degree after successfully passing all exams and defending the Master thesis, and that the diploma and Diploma Supplement are issued by UCV upon request. The current anonymised joint diploma further confirms the award of the official joint degree, including the participating institutions, relevant institutional signatures and registration information.

However, the wording in the Student Toolkit is not sufficiently precise. The formulation that students will be awarded "a combination of Joint diploma" and that the joint Master's degree "refers to the following degrees issued by the universities of Consortium" may create the impression of a multiple-degree arrangement rather than a joint degree. This does not affect the compliance judgement, as the formal degree-awarding evidence confirms the award of a joint degree, but the student-facing documentation should be revised to avoid ambiguity.

Although Universitatea Tehnica de Constructii Bucuresti (UTCB) participates in the implementation of the programme but does not award the joint degree due to national legal restrictions, this does not prevent compliance with the criterion. The programme leads to a legally valid joint degree awarded by the degree-awarding partners, with UCV issuing the diploma on behalf of the consortium.

Compliance: Yes

Enhancement area

- Revise the wording in the Student Toolkit to clearly state that graduates receive a joint Master's degree / joint diploma in Marine Biotechnology. The list of national degree titles should be presented as the national legal titles reflected in or associated with the joint degree, not as separate degrees awarded independently by each consortium university.

A.2.3: Joint Diploma Supplement

A joint Diploma Supplement is issued to students.

Assessment

The evidence confirms that a joint Diploma Supplement is issued to graduates of the joint programme. The HCERES evaluation report confirms that the Cooperation Agreement covers the Diploma Supplement arrangements and identifies Universidad Católica de Valencia (UCV) as the institution responsible for issuing and registering the joint Diploma Supplement on behalf of the consortium.

The current evidence shows that students apply for the diploma and Diploma Supplement through the Programme Coordinator University and that both documents are issued and registered by UCV on behalf of the consortium. Additional evidence is provided through E12 — Current joint Diploma Supplement, which demonstrates that the programme uses a joint Diploma Supplement based on the model developed by the European Commission, Council of Europe and UNESCO/CEPES.

The joint Diploma Supplement includes information on the qualification, programme level, content and results, certification of the supplement, the participating degree-awarding institutions, and relevant information on the national higher education systems and corresponding national qualification titles. It therefore supports transparency and recognition of the joint qualification. The evidence provided, including a sample of the joint Diploma Supplement, confirms that the criterion is met.

Compliance: Yes

A.2.4: Use of ECTS Users' Guide ●

The joint programme describes the learning outcomes and credits in line with the ECTS Users' Guide.

Assessment

This criterion is fully addressed by a European Approach evaluation, no additional assessment is needed under the Joint European Degree Label.

Compliance: Yes

A.3: Joint arrangements for the joint programme ①

The joint programme has joint policies, procedures and/or arrangements defining curriculum planning and delivery, as well as all organisational and administrative matters. Students' representatives are part of the decision-making process to define the joint policies and procedures and/or arrangements.

Assessment

The evidence confirms that the joint programme has joint policies, procedures and arrangements covering curriculum planning and delivery, as well as the main organisational and administrative aspects of the programme. These include governance, admission and selection, mobility, assessment, credit transfer, degree awarding, financial arrangements, quality assurance and student services.

The joint arrangements are implemented through consortium-level governance structures, including the Programme Board, Programme Coordinator University, Selection Committee, Joint Master External Advisory Board and Academic Council. These structures provide a framework for joint planning, implementation, monitoring and enhancement of the programme.

The Programme Board includes representatives of the partner universities and student representatives. The evidence, including Programme Board and Joint External Advisory Board minutes, shows that these structures operate in practice and that students are involved in discussions concerning programme organisation, learning methods, internships, student support and quality enhancement.

The evidence therefore demonstrates that the programme is governed and delivered through joint arrangements and that student representatives are included in the decision-making processes related to the joint policies, procedures and arrangements of the programme.

Compliance: Yes

A.4: Quality assurance arrangements

A.4.1: Internal and external quality assurance ●

Internal and external quality assurance is conducted in accordance with the ESG. The HEIs, the field of study or the programme are evaluated by a QA agency registered in the EQAR or an EU agency fully implementing the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes.

Assessment

This criterion is fully addressed by a European Approach evaluation, no additional assessment is needed under the Joint European Degree Label.

Compliance: Yes

A.4.2: European approach ●

The joint programme is evaluated using the standards of the European Approach.

Assessment

This criterion is fully addressed by a European Approach evaluation, no additional assessment is needed under the Joint European Degree Label.

Compliance: Yes

A.5: Graduate tracking ○

The joint programme monitors graduates through a graduate tracking system or using data collected by the European Higher Education Sector Observatory

Assessment

The evidence confirms that the joint programme has established a programme-level graduate tracking and labour-market monitoring mechanism embedded in its internal quality assurance system, notably through IQP 07 “Labour market integration analysis” in the Quality Assurance Guidelines.

The mechanism is operationalised through the JMPMB Survey on entry to the labour market, which collects detailed information on graduates’ transition after completion of the programme. This includes their employment or PhD status, time needed to obtain employment or a PhD position, the type and location of the employer or host institution, the field of work or research, and the relationship between the graduate’s current position and the study track completed. The survey also collects information on the qualification level required for the position, level of responsibility, job or PhD satisfaction, and the extent to which different elements of the programme contributed to graduates’ career development, including international mobility, acquired competences, professional networks, internship, research placement and Master thesis.

The Quality Assurance Guidelines foresee that graduate tracking results are used in cohort reviews, improvement plans, meta-evaluation, global improvement reports and strategic proposals by the Academic Council. The design of the graduate tracking system is therefore sufficiently developed and connected to programme enhancement.

However, the evidence provided mainly demonstrates the existence and design of the graduate tracking mechanism, rather than its implementation and use in practice. No graduate tracking report or analysis of results, for example for the first cohort, was provided. In addition, the first graduate tracking appears to take place two years after completion of the programme, which means that cohort reviews and improvement plans may not capture graduate outcomes in a timely way.

The criterion is met, as a graduate tracking system is in place. However, the programme should strengthen the evidence of implementation by producing and using regular graduate tracking reports and by ensuring that graduate outcome data are available in time to inform programme reviews and improvement planning.

Compliance: Yes

Recommendation

- Systematise the implementation and use of the graduate tracking system by ensuring regular survey implementation, monitoring response rates, preparing graduate tracking reports for each cohort, and explicitly documenting how graduate tracking results inform curriculum development, employability-related improvements and strategic decisions of the Academic Council. As part of this, the consortium should provide an example of a graduate tracking report for the first cohort and clarify how data collected two years after graduation are integrated into the improvement of the running programme.

A.6: Student-centred learning ●

The joint programme is designed and continuously enhanced and delivered in a way that encourages students to take an active role in the learning process. Assessment of students reflects this approach.

Assessment

This criterion is fully addressed by a European Approach evaluation, no additional assessment is needed under the Joint European Degree Label.

Compliance: Yes

A.7: Transnational campus – access to services ①

The programme has joint policies for students and staff to have access to relevant services in all participating higher education institutions under conditions equivalent to those for all enrolled students and local staff.

Assessment

The evidence demonstrates that students and staff of the joint programme have access to relevant physical infrastructure, support services and IT services across the participating institutions under conditions equivalent to those available to local students and staff. The previous European Approach evaluation assessed student support and resources as compliant, and current evidence further confirms access to services for students and staff across the EU-CONEXUS intercampus.

For students, comprehensive joint arrangements are evidenced through the Student Toolkit, Campus Services Toolkits, Academic Support System and related support mechanisms. These cover mobility, registration, student status, academic and career support, disability services, accommodation, health services, libraries, laboratories, study rooms, language courses, welcome activities, tutoring, integration measures and digital services.

For staff, the Consortium Agreement, mobility arrangements, EU-CONEXUS Mobility Office, language support measures, digital collaboration tools and staff training activities demonstrate access to relevant services supporting teaching, mobility, coordination, online delivery and professional development across the consortium. However, unlike the student-related evidence, the staff-related evidence is distributed across several documents and is not presented in a single, coherent joint policy or practical information document. This makes the support framework for staff less transparent, although the available evidence still provides sufficient assurance that the criterion is met.

The evidence also confirms that EU-CONEXUS Smart Campus functions as an alliance-wide online learning environment supporting programme delivery. However, access to IT services across consortium partners for students and staff during the whole duration of the programme is less explicitly presented in joint policy or practical guidance. The available evidence provides sufficient assurance that the criterion is met, but the consortium should clarify more systematically which IT services are available across the transnational campus, to whom, under what conditions, and whether access applies only during physical mobility or throughout the programme.

Compliance: Yes

Recommendations

- The programme could further clarify and make more visible the information on academic staff access to relevant services across the transnational campus, while taking into account the institutional rules and mobility arrangements of each partner university.
- Clarify in joint programme documentation which IT services and digital facilities are available to students and staff across the consortium for the whole duration of the programme, including access conditions when students or staff are not physically present at a given partner institution.

A.8: Flexible and embedded student mobility

A.8.1: 30 ECTS physical mobility

The joint programme offers student physical mobility of at least 30 ECTS (that can be split over several stays) at one or more partner institution(s). The joint programme has a policy offering alternatives for students who are unable to travel, such as virtual exchanges and/or blended mobility

Assessment

The evidence confirms that the joint programme includes embedded physical mobility of at least 30 ECTS. The Student Agreement explicitly states that students must spend at least 30 ECTS, corresponding to one academic semester, in countries different from the country of residence at enrolment. This requirement is embedded in the programme structure, with students undertaking study periods at different consortium institutions, including Semester 1 at UCV, Semester 2 at Université de La Rochelle, a 6 ECTS internship, Semester 3 according to the selected specialisation track, and the Master thesis at a partner, associated partner or other higher education/research institution. Programme documentation also confirms that credits acquired during mobility are fully academically recognised.

The evidence further confirms that programme-level arrangements are in place for students who are unable to undertake planned physical mobility due to duly justified circumstances. The Academic coordinator's note defines a sufficiently clear framework for mobility alternatives, including eligible circumstances such as disability, health-related circumstances, caring responsibilities, visa or legal constraints, force majeure and severe economic, social or personal barriers. It also identifies possible alternatives, including

adapted mobility pathways, deferral, blended mobility, virtual exchange or virtual collaborative learning, adapted learning agreements, remote or hybrid assessment and reasonable accommodation.

The above mentioned document also defines the procedure for requesting alternative arrangements, academic safeguards to ensure equivalent workload, ECTS value and learning outcomes, and monitoring through the programme's quality assurance mechanisms. However, the document is presented as a note issued by the Academic Coordinator, and formal approval by the relevant programme governance body is not evidenced. This does not prevent a positive assessment of the criterion, as both the embedded physical mobility requirement and the requirement to provide alternatives for students unable to travel are met, but the formal status of the document should be strengthened.

Compliance: Yes

Recommendation

- Formally approve the programme-level policy or procedure on mobility alternatives through the Programme Board or another relevant programme governance body.

A.8.2: Six months physical mobility

The joint programme offers at least six months of physical mobility at one or more partner institution(s). The joint programme has a policy offering alternatives for students who are unable to travel.

Assessment

This criterion applies only to doctoral programmes and is therefore not applicable in this assessment.

Compliance: Not applicable

A.9: Co-evaluation and co-supervision for dissertations

Dissertations are supervised by at least 2 supervisors and co-evaluated by co-supervisors or a committee with members from at least 2 different institutions located in 2 different countries

Assessment

This criterion applies only to doctoral programmes and is therefore not applicable in this assessment.

Compliance: Not applicable

DIMENSION B: EUROPEAN DIMENSION CRITERIA

B1: Interdisciplinarity and research-based learning ○

The joint programme's arrangements include embedded interdisciplinarity and/or research-based learning components, tailored to the nature and circumstances of the joint programme.

Assessment

The evidence demonstrates that the joint programme includes embedded interdisciplinarity and research-based learning components tailored to the field and level of a joint Master's programme in Marine Biotechnology. Interdisciplinarity is reflected in the curriculum, which combines biological, biochemical, molecular, genomic, bioprocess, business, innovation and sustainability-related perspectives. The programme is designed around the marine biotechnology pipeline, from biodiscovery to market-oriented applications, and prepares students to contribute to innovative products and services in areas such as health, cosmetics, nutrition, aquaculture and the Blue Bio-economy.

The curriculum structure combines a common interdisciplinary foundation in the first year with thematic specialisation in the second year. The first year includes shared core training in areas such as Marine Omics, Marine Biodiversity Prospecting, Blue Biotechnology Business and R&D Management, and Biochemistry of Marine Natural Products. In the second year, students specialise through one of four tracks: Innovative Bioproducts for Future, Blue Biomass, Marine Biorefinery or Aquaculture Biotechnology.

Research-based learning is compulsory and embedded in the programme. The Academic Research Integration course requires students from different specialisations and locations to collaborate on multidisciplinary research projects designed by academic staff from different specialisations. In addition, the 30 ECTS Master thesis requires students to formulate and develop a research topic, apply appropriate scientific methods, critically analyse the selected topic or problem, and defend their results publicly.

The Compendia of Innovations provide useful evidence of student research and innovation projects. However, they do not always make explicit how different disciplinary perspectives, methods or sectoral perspectives are integrated within individual projects. This does not prevent a positive assessment of the criterion, but the interdisciplinary dimension of Academic Research Integration projects could be more clearly designed, documented and communicated.

The evidence therefore confirms that interdisciplinarity and research-based learning are core features of the programme and that the criterion is met.

Compliance: Yes

Recommendations

- The programme could further enhance the visibility of the interdisciplinary dimension of student research projects by making clearer, where appropriate, how different disciplinary perspectives, methods or sectoral perspectives are integrated into project-based learning activities.
- Clarify the meaning of “Collaborated in...” in the Compendia of Innovations, including whether it refers to collaboration with external project partners, academic supervisors, partner institutions or other contributors.

B2: Opportunities for learning beyond academia and employability

The joint programme's arrangements foresee opportunities to broaden the learning experience of students beyond the academic context, tailored to the nature and circumstances of the joint programme, including labour market requirements incorporating inter-sectoral components or activities and development of transversal skills.

Assessment

The evidence demonstrates that the joint programme provides structured opportunities for students to broaden their learning experience beyond academia and to develop transversal and professional competences relevant to employability. The previous HCERES evaluation confirmed that the curriculum was informed by labour-market and stakeholder input, including skills mapping and consultation with socio-economic stakeholders in the field of marine biotechnology.

A central element is the compulsory 6 ECTS / 8-week internship, embedded in the curriculum and conceived as professional practice in a company or institution. The internship enables students to apply knowledge and skills in a professional context and is supported by internal and external supervision, reporting and assessment arrangements, as well as provisions related to confidentiality and intellectual property where relevant. The involvement of external supervisors from host companies or institutions further confirms the engagement of professionals in the students' learning experience.

Employability and transversal skills are also supported through the Blue Biotechnology Business and R&D Management courses, the Academic Research Integration course, and Blue Innovation Day. The Master thesis may also be carried out in partner universities, associated partners or other higher education and research institutions, with external co-supervision where appropriate. These activities expose students to professional contexts, external stakeholders, research dissemination, entrepreneurship, teamwork,

communication and networking. Blue Innovation Day and the Compendia of Innovations provide further opportunities for students to present research results and interact with industry representatives, stakeholders, academics and wider society.

The evidence therefore confirms that opportunities for learning beyond academia and employability are embedded in the programme and that the criterion is met.

Compliance: Yes

Recommendations

- The programme could continue to document the range of external stakeholders involved in curriculum-embedded learning activities to further demonstrate the contribution of these activities to employability and learning beyond academia.

B3: Digitalisation ○

The joint programme's arrangements include opportunities for students to develop adequate digital skills and competence, tailored to the nature and circumstances of the joint programme.

Assessment

The evidence demonstrates that digitalisation is embedded both in the learning environment and in the curriculum. At programme-delivery level, students use the EU-CONEXUS Smart Campus as a common digital learning environment. After registration, students also have access to institutional email, Moodle, e-library services and digital platforms supporting mentoring, project allocation, internship search, academic guidance, career support, learning resources and collaboration across partner institutions. The Smart Campus provides students and staff with a shared digital environment for remote and cross-institutional collaboration.

At curriculum level, the programme develops digital competences in a discipline-specific way, directly linked to Marine Biotechnology. The programme includes learning outcomes and course content related to large-scale data management, genome-analysis tools, next-generation sequencing data analysis, proteomics and metabolomics workflows, bioinformatic tools, genome assembly and annotation, databases, virtual screening, machine learning and deep learning pipelines. Advanced digital skills are therefore integrated into several technical and scientific components of the curriculum.

Additional digital learning opportunities are available through EU-CONEXUS master-level micro-credentials, including digital communication and dissemination-related activities such as Scholarly Podcasting and Digital Storytelling. While these micro-credentials provide relevant complementary opportunities, the evidence could more clearly

show how the alliance-level offer is aligned with and promoted in relation to the specific digital competence needs of Marine Biotechnology students.

Compliance: Yes

B4: Values ○

The joint programme's arrangements adhere to the values of the EHEA (academic freedom, academic integrity, institutional autonomy, student and staff participation in higher education governance, public responsibility for higher education, and public responsibility of higher education) and include a commitment to promote common European values and democratic citizenship.

Assessment

The criterion is met. The evidence demonstrates that the joint programme is covered by a declaration reflecting commitment to the fundamental values of the European Higher Education Area, common European values and democratic citizenship. The EU-CONEXUS Declaration explicitly addresses academic freedom, academic integrity, institutional autonomy, staff and student participation in governance, public responsibility for higher education, and public responsibility of higher education. It also includes a commitment to common European values and democratic citizenship.

The declaration represents an appropriate adaptation of the template provided in the Operational Guide to the governance context of the EU-CONEXUS Alliance. It states that it applies to all EU-CONEXUS activities, including all EU-CONEXUS joint study programmes, and was adopted by the EU-CONEXUS Governing Board, as the highest decision-making body of the Alliance, and signed on behalf of the Alliance by the President of the Governing Board. The main indicator is therefore met.

The programme also implements these values through participatory governance structures and related guidance documents. Students and staff participate in programme governance through bodies such as the Academic Council, Programme Board, Student Board and Joint Master External Advisory Board. Programme Board and advisory board minutes show that student representatives contribute to discussions on academic, administrative and support matters. Other programme documents also support academic values, including academic integrity, for example through provisions related to plagiarism.

However, the declaration is not yet sufficiently integrated into the key legal, governance and public documentation of the Alliance and the programme. In particular, the evidence base would be strengthened if the declaration were explicitly referenced in the JMPMB Agreement / Consortium Agreement or in other key programme governance

documents. In addition, the declaration was not identified on the EU-CONEXUS public Documents & Policies webpage, nor in the public Documentation section of the JMPMB webpage. This indicates that, although the declaration exists and is formally valid as evidence for this assessment, it is not yet sufficiently visible or embedded in the public documentation framework of either the Alliance or the programme.

The evidence provided also places stronger emphasis on student participation in governance than on staff participation. While staff participation is covered in the declaration and governance framework, the evidence base would be strengthened by documenting staff representation, consultation or participation in relevant programme bodies more explicitly and systematically.

The self-assessment report does not include a dedicated section on stakeholder input into the self-assessment process, as proposed in Annex 3 of the Operational Guide. Nevertheless, this did not prevent the assessors from carrying out the assessment, as the evidence provided was sufficient to analyse compliance of the JMPMB with the criteria of the Joint European Degree Label.

Compliance: Yes

Recommendations

- Consider referencing the EU-CONEXUS Declaration on adherence to EHEA Fundamental Values, Common European Values and Democratic Citizenship in relevant JMPMB programme governance documents, where appropriate, in order to further strengthen transparency and visibility.
- Publish the declaration on the EU-CONEXUS Documents & Policies webpage: <https://www.eu-conexus.eu/en/documents-policies/> and in the JMPMB Documentation section: <https://www.eu-conexus.eu/en/marine-biotechnology/#Documentation>, in order to ensure transparency and visibility at both Alliance and programme level.
- Strengthen the evidence base on staff participation in programme governance, for example by documenting staff representation, consultation or participation in relevant programme bodies in a clearer and more systematic way, comparable to the evidence provided for student participation.

B5: Multilingualism ○

The joint programme's arrangements offer opportunities to equip each student with language skills through exposure to at least 2 different EU languages during learning activities or mobility.

Assessment

The evidence confirms that the programme offers students opportunities to develop language skills through exposure to at least two different EU languages during learning activities and mobility. English is the language of instruction, communication and assessment and is used consistently as the common academic language of the joint programme.

In addition to English, the embedded mobility structure exposes students to the national languages of the host countries. All students start the programme at UCV in Spain and continue the second semester at Université de La Rochelle in France. Depending on the selected specialisation track, internship, Academic Research Integration project and Master thesis placement, students may also be exposed to Greek, Lithuanian, Croatian and/or Romanian in later stages of the programme.

The programme also provides structured language-learning opportunities. During their stay at each EU-CONEXUS university, students may enrol free of charge in a course of the national language of the host country, up to 6 ECTS. These courses are assessed and included in the Diploma Supplement. The Master thesis guidelines further require the thesis abstract to be written in English and in the language of the country of the host university or host institution.

The programme therefore combines English-medium instruction, compulsory transnational mobility and structured opportunities to learn host-country languages. The evidence confirms that students are exposed to at least two EU languages and that the criterion is met.

Compliance: Yes

B.6: Inclusiveness

B.6.1: Diversity, equality, inclusion ○

The joint programme's arrangements include a commitment to wide participation by fostering diversity, equality, and inclusion and by adopting tailored measures to support students and staff with fewer opportunities.

Assessment

The evidence demonstrates that the joint programme is covered by documented commitments to diversity, equality and inclusion and that specific support measures are in place for students with fewer opportunities, particularly students with disabilities and

special needs. The strongest evidence is Students with disabilities or special needs information package, which maps partner-level disability and special needs services across the consortium, including counselling, psychological support, adapted infrastructure, adapted software and devices, personalised study and assessment arrangements, and possible financial support within the Erasmus Mundus Joint Masters framework.

The evidence also shows that the programme and consortium partners have extensive institutional resources, services and procedures for inclusion, from which the EU-CONEXUS alliance and the JMPMB benefit. However, these measures are currently presented mainly as a mapping of partner-level provisions rather than as an integrated programme- or alliance-level inclusion strategy with defined objectives, actions, responsibilities and monitoring arrangements. This makes the support framework credible and operational, but less systematic in terms of planning, implementation monitoring and measuring impact. In addition, the evidence does not show how many students require, apply for or make use of these provisions, which further limits the assessment of their practical uptake and impact.

The criterion is therefore met, as the programme has documented inclusion commitments and concrete support measures applicable to students with fewer opportunities. At the same time, the evidence base would be strengthened by consolidating existing measures into a clearer strategic and monitoring framework, and by giving more attention to staff capacity-building for inclusion.

Compliance: Yes

Recommendations

- Consider developing a consolidated programme- or Alliance-level inclusion strategy/action plan that brings together existing partner-level inclusion measures, defines common objectives, actions, responsibilities and monitoring indicators, and enables the programme to assess the implementation, uptake and impact of inclusion measures.
- Include measures for initial and continuing professional development of academic and administrative staff in the programme- or Alliance-level inclusion strategy/action plan, to support staff in working professionally and equitably with a diverse student body and staff across the transnational campus.
- Given the complexity of a highly mobile joint programme, further clarify the cross-institutional procedures and contact points for students with disabilities or special needs, ensuring that reasonable accommodations are consistently coordinated across all mobility locations.

B.6.2: European Charter for Researchers ○

The joint programme's arrangements include a commitment to respect the principles of the European Charter for Researchers

Assessment

This criterion applies only to doctoral programmes and is therefore not applicable in this assessment.

Compliance: Not applicable

B7: Environmental sustainability ○

The joint programme's arrangements include policies and actions related to environmental sustainability and implement measures to minimise the environmental footprint of its activities and foresee opportunities for students to develop adequate green skills and competences, tailored to the nature and circumstances of the joint programme

Assessment

The evidence demonstrates that environmental sustainability is embedded in the programme's academic rationale, curriculum and delivery context. The JMPMB is directly linked to the EU-CONEXUS mission as the European University for Smart Urban Coastal Sustainability, and the programme connects marine biotechnology with the sustainable development of the marine environment, Blue Growth, the Blue Economy and wider sustainability objectives.

Students are provided with curricular opportunities to develop green skills and competences through learning outcomes related to marine genetic resources, aquatic resources, environmental marine microbiome, ecosystem management, sustainable aquaculture, environmental applications of genomic data analysis and other sustainability-related areas. The specialisation tracks, student innovation projects and EU-CONEXUS micro-credentials provide further opportunities for environmental sustainability-related learning.

The evidence also shows measures to reduce the environmental impact of programme delivery, including the use of digital services, Moodle, e-library, Smart Campus and online collaboration tools, as well as encouragement of sustainable travel where feasible. The evidence therefore confirms that both indicators of the criterion are met.

Compliance: Yes

Recommendation

- Continue to monitor and review the environmental impact of compulsory mobility and joint programme activities, and identify opportunities to reduce this impact over time, while preserving the academic value, accessibility and inclusiveness of mobility.

Summary of the assessment

STANDARD	ASSESSMENT
DIMENSION A: PROGRAMME ORGANISATION CRITERIA	
A.1: Higher education institutions involved	Compliant
A.2: Transnational joint degree delivery	
A.2.1: Joint design and delivery	Compliant
A.2.2: Joint degree	Compliant
A.2.3: Joint Diploma Supplement	Compliant
A.2.4: Use of ECTS Users' Guide	Compliant
A.3: Joint arrangements for the joint programme	Compliant
A.4: Quality assurance arrangements	
A.4.1: Internal and external quality assurance	Compliant
A.4.2: European approach	Compliant
A.5: Graduate tracking	Compliant
A.6: Student-centred learning	Compliant
A.7: Transnational campus – access to services	Compliant
A.8: Flexible and embedded student mobility	
A.8.1: 30 ECTS physical mobility	Compliant
A.8.2: Six months physical mobility	Not applicable
A.9: Co-evaluation and co-supervision for dissertations	Not applicable
DIMENSION B: EUROPEAN DIMENSION CRITERIA	
B1: Interdisciplinarity and research-based learning	Compliant
B2: Opportunities for learning beyond academia and employability	Compliant
B3: Digitalisation	Compliant
B4: Values	Compliant
B5: Multilingualism	Compliant
B.6: Inclusiveness	
B.6.1: Diversity, equality, inclusion	Compliant
B.6.2: European Charter for Researchers	Not applicable
B7: Environmental sustainability	Compliant

The External Assessment Committee recommends to the Institutional and Programme Review Commission of AQU Catalunya that the programme **be awarded** the Joint European Degree Label.

Summary of enhancement areas

A.1: Higher education institutions involved

- Clarify and document the role of Universitatea Tehnica de Constructii Bucuresti (UTCB) as a non-degree-awarding consortium partner. In line with the Operational Guide, non-degree-awarding higher education institutions may contribute to the delivery of a joint programme, for example through teaching, mobility placements, research facilities or other programme activities, however they may not award additional national degrees in addition to the joint degree. Therefore, the evidence should clearly specify UTCB's functions within the joint programme consortium.

The consortium should therefore clarify how UTCB contributes to programme delivery, mobility, teaching, supervision, research facilities, student services, governance and quality assurance, as applicable. It should also explain how activities carried out at or through UTCB are covered by the joint programme arrangements and how the experience of students undertaking mobility, research or other programme activities at UTCB is integrated into the joint programme.

Finally, the consortium should clarify how UTCB's non-degree-awarding role is communicated to students, given that UTCB does not co-award the joint degree and would therefore not be listed as a degree-awarding institution in the joint diploma or Diploma Supplement, nor in the Joint European Degree Label certificate.

A.2: Transnational joint degree delivery

A.2.2: Joint degree

- Revise the wording in the Student Toolkit to clearly state that graduates receive a joint Master's degree / joint diploma in Marine Biotechnology. The list of national degree titles should be presented as the national legal titles reflected in or associated with the joint degree, not as separate degrees awarded independently by each consortium university.

Summary of recommendations

A.5: Graduate tracking

- Systematise the implementation and use of the graduate tracking system by ensuring regular survey implementation, monitoring response rates, preparing graduate tracking reports for each cohort, and explicitly documenting how graduate tracking results inform curriculum development, employability-related improvements and strategic decisions of the Academic Council. As part of this, the consortium should provide an example of a graduate tracking report for the first cohort and clarify how data collected two years after graduation are integrated into the improvement of the running programme.

A.7: Transnational campus – access to services

- The programme could further clarify and make more visible the information on academic staff access to relevant services across the transnational campus, while taking into account the institutional rules and mobility arrangements of each partner university.
- Clarify in joint programme documentation which IT services and digital facilities are available to students and staff across the consortium for the whole duration of the programme, including access conditions when students or staff are not physically present at a given partner institution.

A.8: Flexible and embedded student mobility

A.8.1: 30 ECTS physical mobility

- Formally approve the programme-level policy or procedure on mobility alternatives through the Programme Board or another relevant programme governance body.

B1: Interdisciplinarity and research-based learning

- The programme could further enhance the visibility of the interdisciplinary dimension of student research projects by making clearer, where appropriate, how different disciplinary perspectives, methods or sectoral perspectives are integrated into project-based learning activities.
- Clarify the meaning of “Collaborated in...” in the Compendia of Innovations, including whether it refers to collaboration with external project partners, academic supervisors, partner institutions or other contributors.

B2: Opportunities for learning beyond academia and employability

- The programme could continue to document the range of external stakeholders involved in curriculum-embedded learning activities to further demonstrate the contribution of these activities to employability and learning beyond academia.

B4: Values

- Consider referencing the EU-CONEXUS Declaration on adherence to EHEA Fundamental Values, Common European Values and Democratic Citizenship in relevant JMPMB programme governance documents, where appropriate, in order to further strengthen transparency and visibility.
- Publish the declaration on the EU-CONEXUS Documents & Policies webpage: <https://www.eu-conexus.eu/en/documents-policies/> and in the JMPMB Documentation section: <https://www.eu-conexus.eu/en/marine-biotechnology/#Documentation>, in order to ensure transparency and visibility at both Alliance and programme level.
- Strengthen the evidence base on staff participation in programme governance, for example by documenting staff representation, consultation or participation in relevant programme bodies in a clearer and more systematic way, comparable to the evidence provided for student participation.

B.6: Inclusiveness

B.6.1: Diversity, equality, inclusion

- Consider developing a consolidated programme- or Alliance-level inclusion strategy/action plan that brings together existing partner-level inclusion measures, defines common objectives, actions, responsibilities and monitoring indicators, and enables the programme to assess the implementation, uptake and impact of inclusion measures.
- Include measures for initial and continuing professional development of academic and administrative staff in the programme- or Alliance-level inclusion strategy/action plan, to support staff in working professionally and equitably with a diverse student body and staff across the transnational campus.
- Given the complexity of a highly mobile joint programme, further clarify the cross-institutional procedures and contact points for students with disabilities or special needs, ensuring that reasonable accommodations are consistently coordinated across all mobility locations.

B7: Environmental sustainability

- Continue to monitor and review the environmental impact of compulsory mobility and joint programme activities, and identify opportunities to reduce this impact over time, while preserving the academic value, accessibility and inclusiveness of mobility.

The Chair of the external evaluation committee states that this document constitutes the assessment report.

Chair: Ninoslav Šćukanec Schmidt

Zagreb, 01.07.2026.

List of evidence provided

- E01. Hceres final evaluation and accreditation report
- E02. Self-evaluation Report with annexes.pdf
- E03. JMPMB Agreement - Consortium Agreement
- E04. ECTS Course Catalogue.pdf
- E05. Admission procedure and calendar. 2026 intake
- E06. Student agreement. Template. 2026-2027
- E07. Student toolkit. 2026-2027
- E08. Academic Calendar. 2026-2027
- E09. Students assessment regulations
- E10. Master thesis guidelines. 2023
- E11. Current joint diploma
- E12. Current joint diploma supplement
- E13. Quality Assurance Guidelines. 2022
- E14. EU-CONEXUS public programme webpage Joint Master Programme in Marine Biotechnology
- E15. Proof of accreditation
- E16. EU-CONEXUS Student Board Statute. 2025
- E17. Election of students representatives. 2025
- E18. Programme Board minutes. 2024
- E19. Joint External Advisory Board and Programme Board minutes. 2025
- E20. QE (12) MSc meta-evaluation report. 2025
- E21. QE (12) Global improvement report. 2025
- E22. Academic Council Strategic Proposals for improvements. 2026
- E23. Campus services toolkits. 2025-2026
- E24. Joint training concept on integration and academic success. 2023
- E25. Staff training programmes. Examples
- E26. Note on mobility alternatives
- E27. Academic-Support-System. 2025
- E28. Students with disabilities or special needs information package
- E29. GAP invitation letter for EMJM.
- E30. Compedium of Innovations. 2024

- E31. Compedium of Innovations. 2025
- E32. Blue Innovation Day. Technical Specification
- E33. Internship-guidelines. 2023
- E34. EU-CONEXUS webpage Master Micro-credentials
- E35. EU-CONEXUS Declaration on adherence to European values
- E36. JMPMB Survey on entry to the labour market 2026