

FOLLOW-UP DECISION OF THE SPECIFIC COMMISSION FOR SCIENCES OF THE CATALAN UNIVERSITY QUALITY ASSURANCE AGENCY ON THE STUDY PROGRAMME

Study programme	Master's in Planetary Health (PATH)
Jointly offered by	Eötvös Loránd University (ELTE, Hungary)- Coordinator Åbo Akademi University (AAU, Finland) Trinity College Dublin (TCD, Ireland) University of Barcelona (UB, Spain) Julius Maximilians Universität Würzburg (JMU, Germany)
Workload	120 ECTS
Date of evidence submission for requirements correction	10/10/2025

Introduction

On 15th September 2025, the Specific Commission for Sciences of the Catalan University Quality Assurance Agency issued an initial decision granting accreditation to the Master's in Planetary Health (PATH) program, but requiring the consortium to address a specific requirement related to the Study Programme within six months from the date of the decision. In addition, the Commission provided a series of recommendations aimed at further improvement of the programme. This Follow-up Decision evaluates the evidence provided in the documentation titled "Answers to PATH – Planetary Health Master's Proposal Evaluation Report".

Analysis

Requirement

Study Programme (Standard 3)

- > *"Develop tailored introductory courses during the preparatory phase to address the diverse academic backgrounds of students justifying both the content of the courses and the instructions for those who must take them. For example, one course could provide foundational knowledge in legal, administration and policy disciplines for students with*

mostly natural science backgrounds, and another one to cover basic natural science perceptions for students from mostly social science backgrounds”.

The consortium has submitted a strategy for differentiated student preparation during the preparatory phase, aiming to establish the necessary knowledge framework for the program’s transdisciplinary approach. The proposed strategy includes:

1. **Student Categorization:** Students are categorized into three groups upon registration based on academic background: Group A: STEM; Group B: Health Sciences; and Group C: Non-STEM (Social Sciences, Economics, Business, Law, Arts).
2. **Foundational Materials:** Each student receives a tailored blended learning package (short videos, quizzes, glossary, selected readings) accessible immediately upon registration.
3. **Diagnostic Assessment:** In the second week of the Preparatory Phase, students complete a diagnostic assessment aligned with specific Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) related to their group (STEM: PLO1–2; Health Sciences: PLO3; non-STEM: PLO5–7). Immediate feedback is provided (PASS/FAIL).
4. **Preparatory Courses:** Students who do not pass the diagnostic tests are enrolled in 1–3 preparatory courses, each lasting four weeks. These courses focus on 3–4 Planetary Health case studies, approached at the foundational level of Bloom’s taxonomy.
5. **Coordination:** The preparation blocks are coordinated by partner universities: STEM block (Åbo Akademi University and UB); Health Sciences (TCD and JMU); non-STEM block (ELTE and TCD).
6. **The Preparatory Phase ends with a joint student-teacher workshop** where student groups present their case study understanding.

Evaluation

The documentation provided a comprehensive detailed mechanism for implementing tailored introductory courses, including the rationale for their content (Planetary Health case studies) and the defined process for selecting which students must enroll. The review of the documentation confirms that the strategy for student preparation is sufficiently clear and appropriate to address the requirement concerning the diverse academic backgrounds of incoming students.

It is considered that the requirement **has been met**.

Conclusion

Based on the documentation submitted and the discussions of the Specific Commission for Sciences in its meeting on 7th November 2025, it is decided:

1. The study programme “Master’s in Planetary Health (PATH)” offered by Eötvös Loránd University (Hungary) in cooperation with Åbo Akademi University (AAU, Finland), Trinity College Dublin (TCD, Ireland); University of Barcelona (UB, Spain); Julius Maximilians Universität Würzburg (JMU, Germany) **is accredited** according to the criteria and procedures defined in the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes.
2. The study programme complies with the requirements defined by the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes and the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) in their current version.
3. The following recommendations remain applicable for the continued enhancement of the program:

Eligibility (standard 1)

- > Continue monitoring potential changes in national legislation that could affect the recognition and issuance of the joint diploma, especially since only Eötvös Loránd University is designated as the diploma-issuing authority.
- > Appoint dedicated personnel in due time to support the administration and coordination of the PATH programme as it matures. Appointing such personnel would strengthen the programme’s operational resilience and ensure focused attention on programme-specific needs.
- > Establish a regular review mechanism: To maintain alignment with evolving regulatory, financial, and institutional contexts across partner countries, the consortium should implement a formal mechanism for the periodic review and updating of the Cooperation Agreement. Implementing such a mechanism will help ensure ongoing compliance with national legal frameworks, clarity in institutional roles, and the long-term sustainability of the joint programme.
- > Integrate contingency protocols: Although the agreement already addresses specific scenarios (e.g., issuance of double degrees), it would benefit from more detailed procedures for managing unforeseen disruptions—such as the withdrawal of a partner or significant regulatory changes. Including such contingency measures would enhance the resilience and reliability of the framework.

Learning outcomes (standard 2)

- > Promote consistency in the interpretation and application of learning outcomes across partner institutions by implementing structured cross-institutional dialogue, coordinated calibration activities, and targeted staff development initiatives.
- > The broad scope of topics presents a potential risk of insufficient disciplinary depth. Ongoing monitoring is recommended to ensure students achieve both the necessary breadth and depth in their learning.
- > Closely monitor the achievement of learning outcomes among students from diverse academic backgrounds and be prepared to adjust diagnostic and support mechanisms as needed.
- > Continue regular staff calibration sessions to maintain consistency in teaching standards and to ensure a balanced student workload across all consortium institutions.

Study programme (standard 3)

- > It is recommended that the curriculum incorporate opportunities for critical reflection and analysis of false solutions, to strengthen students' capacity to engage ethically and effectively with complex planetary health challenges. Present more specific information on how the integration of stakeholder feedback will be continuously used to adapt and refine the curriculum during implementation.
- > Make a more precise articulation of assessment methods for each phase regarding how they map to acquiring specific learning outcomes, particularly in the context of students' diverse educational and cultural backgrounds.
- > Once implemented, the consortium should ensure that systematic workload monitoring tools (e.g., student surveys, feedback on time management, completion tracking) are in place from the first cohort onward to validate and, if necessary, adjust the workload assumptions used in the programme design.
- > Support cross-institutional alignment on workload expectations by facilitating regular coordination meetings between teaching staff across partner universities. This can help ensure a balanced workload across modules, especially regarding challenge-based activities.

Admission and Recognition (standard 4)

- > Consider extending the admission timeline or incorporating contingency periods to accommodate the demands of joint evaluation and appeals.
- > Confirm clear communication with applicants about the admission schedule and possible delays.

- > Clarify the description of providing additional or extra points to the applicant and consider whether any alternative documentation could increase their transparency.
- > Once the programme is operational, it should be ensured that mechanisms are in place to monitor the fairness and effectiveness of the admission procedures through applicant feedback, diversity metrics, and selection outcome analysis.
- > The consortium should explicitly outline its intended approach to RPL in the programme documentation. This should include planned methodologies for assessing informal and non-formal learning and a roadmap for developing and operationalising these mechanisms.
- > Provide information to students on the recognition of the joint degree, especially for use outside the partner countries and in varied professional contexts.

Learning, teaching and assessment (standard 5)

- > Strengthen specialised faculty training to enhance effectiveness in hybrid and intercultural teaching environments.
- > Continue to develop coordination mechanisms among partner institutions to support consistent programme delivery.
- > It is recommended that the consortium further details the operational procedures for the Board of Examiners and Portfolio Assessment Committees, including how calibration and cross-institutional moderation will be ensured.

Student support (standard 6)

- > Implement an early-stage diagnostic or needs-assessment survey to identify individual student support requirements—such as digital skills, language assistance, or mental health needs, to provide tailored guidance and service upon arrival.
- > Introduce structured feedback mechanisms during each phase of mobility to evaluate the effectiveness of welcome and support services, to identify areas of improvement and to make timely improvements.

Resources (standard 7)

- > The consortium should implement a shared framework for pedagogical training and exchange of best practices, particularly for transdisciplinary teaching, digital pedagogy, and challenge-based learning. A regular staff development and coordination mechanism would further reinforce programme coherence and quality.

- > Introducing a standardised CV template for academic staff would enhance transparency and facilitate easier assessment of their qualifications and expertise.
- > It is recommended to establish dedicated pedagogical support at the PATH programme level. Such a structure would better coordinate and enhance teaching quality across partner institutions.
- > Establish a structured, ongoing feedback system involving students and staff to regularly assess the quality, accessibility, and effectiveness of both digital and physical infrastructure. This will support continuous improvement, promote equity, and ensure a cohesive and adaptive hybrid and transnational learning environment.

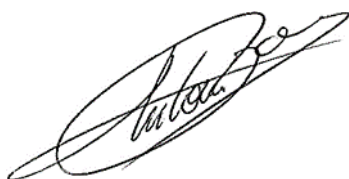
Transparency and documentation (Standard 8)

- > Design a system to monitor and verify that all admission criteria and selection procedures—including evaluation rubrics, appeal procedures, and timelines—are available online before the application cycle begins.
- > The consortium should establish a procedure to ensure that the course catalogue and all syllabi are publicly available and updated before each application cycle. In addition to publishing required documents (e.g., admission criteria, syllabi, appeal procedures), ensure they are presented in a user-friendly, accessible format suitable for diverse international applicants, including those with limited prior experience in joint programmes.
- > It is advisable to explicitly detail the procedures for re-assessment, failure management, and appeals across institutions in one unified document to support student mobility and procedural consistency.

Quality assurance (Standard 9)

- > Develop a quality handbook tailored specifically to the PATH programme. It can build on existing good practices, but to enhance consistency, transparency, and ownership in quality assurance.

The chair of the Specific Commission for Sciences,



Antoni Ras Sabidó