# Joint programmes from A to Z

A reference guide for practitioners

**JDAZ Project Team**

This guide is a result of the Joint Degrees from A to Z (JDAZ) project funded by the Erasmus Mundus programme. The consortium members are listed below.

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[1] Please note that the Erasmus Mundus National Structures (EMNSs) officially cease to exist when the Erasmus Mundus programme came to an end. With the exception of the joint doctorates, the Erasmus Mundus activities are now integrated in the Erasmus+ programme, and the tasks of the EMNSs are now part of the Erasmus+ National Agencies.

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# 1. Introduction

## The JDAZ project

This guide is a result of the Joint Degrees from A to Z (JDAZ) project. Partially funded by the European Commission, the project ran from October 2012 to April 2015. The JDAZ consortium consists of six Erasmus Mundus National Structures (EMNSs). The two core partners in the consortium are the EMNS of the Netherlands (located at EP-Nuffic), acting as project coordinator, and the EMNS of Finland (located at CIMO). The four advisory group partners in the consortium consist of the EMNSs of Austria (located at OeAD), Norway (located at SIU), Lithuania (located at the Education Exchanges Support Foundation) and Poland (located at the Foundation of the Development of the Education System).

The JDAZ consortium benefited from the input and expertise of external experts in the field, representing the JOIMAN consortium, the European quality assurance network (ECA), the wider EMNS network and joint programme practitioners. Their input and debate have strengthened this guide in the expectation that it will contribute to the sustainable development of joint programmes.

## Aim of this guide

The aim of this guide is to provide a comprehensive, practical reference guide on all aspects that need to be taken into account when developing and managing joint programmes. The focus is on programmes leading to a joint or multiple degree and offered by institutions in different countries.

The authors of this guide felt a need to bring together references to all major relevant work on joint programmes. There is a lot of information available in this field, but these data have so far not been available in a central place and in an integrated form.

This guide is based on all major relevant work undertaken in this field. In doing so, this guide aims to support the development of sustainable joint programmes and the further development of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). When setting up a joint programme, it is important to investigate the rules and constraints applicable to your specific situation. So, in addition to the information given in this guide, you will need to look into the applicable regulations in every country and higher education institution of your consortium.

This project started off under the name 'Joint Degrees from A to Z (JDAZ)'. Through progressing insights during the project, we came to the conclusion that this reference guide in fact should have a broader focus on all issues relating to developing and managing joint *programmes* (and not only on joint *degrees*). Therefore, this guide is titled 'Joint programmes from A to Z. A reference guide for practitioners'.

## Target groups

This guide is aimed at four target groups:

1. The National Agencies for Erasmus+, to support them in their advisory role.
2. Higher education institutions and coordinators – in Europe and beyond – interested in setting up or maintaining joint programmes.

3. Current coordinators of established joint programmes, who are working to improve their current practice. These include coordinators of joint programmes that have been developed under funding programmes such as Erasmus Mundus, Erasmus+, Atlantis, EU-Canada, ECP-ICI, Joint Nordic Masters programmes and other initiatives.
4. National research academies in their advisory role on joint doctoral programmes.

This guide is intended to be used as broadly as possible. The suggestions in this guide are generally applicable at bachelor, master and doctoral level. Doctoral-level data are often somewhat different from the bachelor and master levels due to the more unstructured format of PhDs, the complex nature of research (topics), development and supervision. Therefore, the JDAZ guide has a separate chapter on joint doctoral programmes. This chapter is shorter than the other chapters, since there is less information available on joint doctoral programmes.

Although this guide is rooted in a European context, we have attempted to write this guide also with a global outlook: while taking into account that joint programmes are subject to different national and institutional regulations and contexts, many of the aspects mentioned in this guide are basic elements that need to be taken into account in the development of successful and sustainable joint programmes around the world.

## Chapter structure

This guide does not follow the logic of a 'chronological' approach to the development and management of joint programmes (as in: what to think about in the development phase or later, during the implementation). Instead, it has adopted a more 'organic' approach because certain aspects, such as quality assurance and sustainability, should already be taken into account at an early stage in the development process.

Chapter 2 explains the main definitions adopted in this guide. This guide focuses on the development and management of joint and multiple degree programmes (rather than on issuing a joint diploma leading to a joint degree, since issuing a joint diploma is merely one of many aspects of joint programme development).

Chapter 3 offers a general background to the phenomenon of joint programmes and their increasingly important role in the internationalisation of higher education.

Chapter 4 raises awareness of issues relating to different legal frameworks that these programmes may be subject to.

Chapters 5 and 6 deal with all aspects relating to the development (chapter 5) and management (chapter 6) of joint programmes, including continuous consideration of sustainability issues.

Chapters 7 and 8 focus on all issues relating to quality assurance (chapter 7) and recognition (chapter 8) that need to be taken into account when developing and managing joint programmes.

Chapter 9 deals with joint doctoral programmes.

## How to read this guide

This guide focuses on answering practical questions such as: How do you approach joint programme development? What are the crucial aspects that you need to take into account and at what stage?

Based on the literature review and the experience and knowledge of the project consortium, external experts and extensive consultation of stakeholders, the guide presents 'key messages for practitioners' at the beginning of each chapter (and in some cases, at the beginning of a paragraph). The chapter (or paragraph) then elaborates on these key messages and related references. Links to relevant sources are included for those who would like to know more details. These links often provide additional and more detailed information on the relevant issues.

Each chapter identifies 'key sources' and 'other sources'. 'Key sources' are the core sources on the chapter's theme, and include a broad range of useful and good-quality information. 'Other sources' include helpful, but less, details on the chapter's theme. They may, for instance, only briefly mention one aspect of joint programmes.

This guide is not meant to be prescriptive, but suggests guidelines for higher education staff along the different aspects that need to be taken into account when developing and managing joint programmes. Although this guide aims to address all aspects from A to Z, this is done on a general level and so it cannot propose solutions to specific contexts.

Please note that this guide reflects the situation in early 2015 and inevitably, there will be new developments in the field. Until this guide is updated, we advise you to follow new developments. For instance, the Bologna Ministerial Meeting in Yerevan in spring 2015.

# 2. Definitions

This chapter gives an overview of the most relevant definitions that are used in this guide. It includes definitions of a **joint programme,** a **joint degree,** a **joint diploma, accreditation** and **recognition**.

## 2.1. Key messages for practitioners

1. There is confusion around terminology, as several national and international bodies have developed their own, contradicting definitions, which might differ from general conceptions within a specific region or country.

2. The message of the JDAZ guide is to start your cooperation by clarifying the definition of joint programmes (and the joint or multiple degrees that these programmes may lead to) in your own context.

3. So far, the most officially recognised definitions in Europe are those made by the inter-governmental, regional UNESCO Lisbon Recognition Convention, in the Recommendation on the Recognition of Joint Degrees (2004). However, this document is outdated and needs updating and clarifying.

## 2.2. Joint programme

A joint programme is a programme offered jointly by several higher education institutions. These institutions can be located either in the same country or in different countries (the focus of this guide). A joint programme does not necessarily lead to a joint degree. It is only one of the possible awards. After completion of a joint programme a graduate may be awarded: a single national qualification, a double (or other multiple) qualification or a joint qualification.

One of the products of the intergovernmental Bologna Process, the 2012 Implementation Report (p.185), indicates that joint programmes have all or at least some of the following characteristics:

- The programmes are jointly developed and/or approved by several institutions;
- Students from each participating institution study parts of the programme at other institutions;
- The students' stays at the participating institutions are of comparable length;
- Periods of study and exams passed at the partner institution(s) are fully and automatically recognised;
- Professors of each participating institution also teach at the other institutions, jointly work out the curriculum, and form joint admission and examination commissions;
- After completion of the full programme, the student either obtains the national degrees of each participating institution or a degree awarded jointly by them.

## 2.3. Joint degree

According to the Recommendation on the Recognition of Joint Degrees, as part of the Lisbon Recognition Convention, a joint degree may be issued as:

- a joint diploma in addition to one or more national diplomas;
- a joint diploma issued by the institutions offering the study programme in question without being accompanied by any national diploma;
- one or more national diplomas officially issued as the only attestation of the joint qualification in question.

The European Consortium for Accreditation (ECA) makes three remarks on these three points, since the Recommendation has become slightly outdated by now. ECA (Aerden and Reczulska, 2010) explains that:

- it is unlikely that both the joint and the national degree are acknowledged as the national higher education qualification;
- the second part of the definition of the Recommendation is now commonly understood as a joint degree;
- the third part of the definition describes the situation which is currently considered as a multiple degree.

## 2.4.    Joint diploma

In this guide, a 'joint diploma' refers to 'a document issued on successful completion of the programme, indicating that the degree holder has obtained a joint degree.'

## 2.5.    Accreditation

In this guide, 'accreditation' is defined as 'a formal and independent decision indicating that a programme and/or an institution meet(s) certain predefined quality standards.'

## 2.6.    Recognition

In order for the degree to be e.g. considered valid abroad it has to be recognised. In this guide, 'recognition' is defined as 'a formal acknowledgement by a competent authority of the value of a foreign educational qualification with a view to access to educational and/or employment activities.'

## 2.7.    Sources

**Key sources**

*Definitions of Joint Programmes*

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Knight, J., Doubts and Dilemmas with Double Degree Programs, in: "Globalisation and Internationalisation of Higher Education" [online monograph]. Revista de Universidad y Sociedad del Conocimiento (RUSC). Vol. 8, No. 2, pp. 297-312. UOC., 2011, p.299.

*Definitions on joint degrees*

Bologna Implementation Report 2012, p.185.

Committee of the Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications Concerning Higher Education in the European Region, Recommendation on the Recognition of Joint Degrees, p.4.

Aerden, A., H.Reczulska, The recognition of qualifications awarded by joint programmes, ECA, 2010, pp.32-33.

Aerden, A. and J. Lokhoff, Framework for fair recognition of joint degrees, ECA, 2013.

European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), Methodological report of the Transnational European Evaluation Project II (TEEP II). Helsinki, ENQA, 2006, p.10.

**Other sources**

ECAPedia

(Joint degrees): ENQA, Methodological report of the Transnational European Evaluation Project II, 2006, p. 10; European Consortium for Accreditation in Higher Education, *How to Assess and Accredit joint programmes in Europe, 2010,* pp.58-59.

(Joint degree, Erasmus Mundus): European Parliament and Council, Decision No 1298/2008/EC, Official Journal of the European, p.97, Annex.(Qualification): Bologna Follow-Up Group, *Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area*, 2005, p.30.

(Accreditation): European Consortium for Accreditation (ECA), http://www.ecahe.eu/w/index.php/Category:Glossary.

(Recognition): The Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region (The Lisbon Convention), p.4.

# 3. General background

This chapter provides a brief background on the development of joint programmes to describe the operational context. It covers the influence of the Bologna Process, the international visibility and strategic interests of joint programmes and the available financing instruments.

## 3.1. Key messages for practitioners

> 1. The strategic importance of joint programmes is strong and increasing in a global context, both at international inter-governmental level, at national governmental level and at institutional level.

## 3.2. Joint programmes as part of the Bologna Process

The inter-governmental Bologna Process, launched in 1999 with the signing of the Bologna declaration, is one of the main voluntary processes at European level, as it is today being implemented in all 47 states that make up the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). The Bologna Process is meant to ensure more comparable, compatible and coherent higher education systems in Europe. Officially, the term Bologna Process has now been replaced by referring to 'the implementation of the European Higher Education Area'.

The Bologna activities have introduced transparency instruments to support student mobility, such as the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) and the Diploma Supplement (DS).

Joint programmes have been encouraged by the Bologna Process and listed on the agenda of all the Bologna conferences since Prague 2001. During the Bologna conference in Berlin in 2003, ministers explicitly agreed on supporting the development and quality assurance of integrated curricula leading to joint degrees. References to recognition of joint degrees were included in 2005 and in 2007. Joint programmes support various Bologna action lines, such as student mobility, joint curriculum development and joint quality assurance. In the Bucharest Communiqué, ministers committed to 'recognise quality assurance decisions of EQAR-registered agencies on joint and double degree programmes'.

A draft European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes will be presented for adoption by ministers in Yerevan in May 2015, and will commit governments to allow single programme accreditation procedures on that basis.

There is no accurate account of the number of joint programmes. However, the 2009 Bologna Stocktaking Working Group estimated that there are 2,500 joint programmes within the European Higher Education Area. Estimated percentages of higher education institutions involved in joint programmes and awarding joint degrees can be found in the Bologna Process Implementation Report 2012 (p.43).

Activities supported by several EU-funded programmes have contributed to the further development and international expansion of the Bologna Process. Joint curricula were initially supported in the Lifelong Learning Programme through Erasmus. Later joint programme initiatives were financed through programmes such as Erasmus Mundus, EU-USA Atlantis, EU-Canada, the ICI-ECP programme with industrialised countries, and Tempus.

## 3.3. International scope of and strategic interest in joint programme cooperation

The International Association of Universities (IAU) conducts regular surveys on institutional strategic priorities within internationalisation. In the 2010 IAU Survey on internationalisation, higher education institutions ranked joint programmes as a slightly less important internationalisation activity than in 2005.

The conclusion of the Bologna Process Implementation Report 2012 is that several of the 47 Bologna countries have reviewed their legislation to allow and encourage joint programmes, and that the number of students in these programmes is increasing. The EU is continuing its support for international joint programmes within the Erasmus+ programme in the budget period 2014-2020, with an increased budget as compared to the Erasmus Mundus programme.

The concept of joint programmes as a means for internationalisation has spread globally, probably in response to European developments. For instance, the Institute of International Education's transatlantic study (2009) pointed out that US institutions are most likely to have joint programmes with European partners than with institutions in any other region. Another main finding of this report was that among transatlantic partnerships, joint programmes leading to the awarding of two or more diplomas (double/multiple degree programmes) are much more common than joint programmes leading to one diploma (joint degree programmes), most probably due to legal and administrative challenges related to the awarding of a joint diploma.

For Latin America, the 2006 Asturias declaration stressed the development of joint programmes as a priority area for higher education collaboration with EU countries, and as a way to facilitate academic staff, researcher and student mobility. However, in a global context, according to the 2010 International Association of Universities survey, Latin America is lagging behind Africa and also slightly behind the Middle East in terms of numbers of joint and double degree programmes. A strong Latin-American trend is bachelor-level joint programmes between private institutions and master-level joint programmes with public institutions.

In Japan and China, jointly developed collaborative degree programmes have witnessed significant growth during the last decade, as seen in the increase in numbers and government support for this kind of internationalisation activity. 2009 saw the launch of the Campus Asia programme, a regional initiative similar to the European Erasmus Mundus programme.

A JICA Research Institute survey (2010) shows that there were 260 double degree programmes at 85 Japanese Universities in 2008 and senior international officers expect collaborative degree programmes to become more common in the future.

In 2009-2010, an Asian regional research project, titled 'Cross-border Higher Education for Regional Integration and the Labor Market in East Asia' (ASEAN, China, Korea, Japan, Australia), found that:

- improving the quality of education is perceived as a more important outcome of collaborative degree programmes than of traditional forms of simple student mobility;
- most programmes are at master level and within social science, business, law (as compared to business and engineering in Europe);
- it is expected that cross-border higher education (including joint programmes) will lead to added value in academic and political terms, but that they do not lead to financial profit;

- the risks perceived are within administrative capacity, ensuring quality and regulation for credit transfer.

There is no global estimate of the numbers of joint programmes and very few statistical surveys have been conducted. However, the most extensive survey done by the Institute of International Education (IIE, 2013) reports that almost all of the participating 245 higher education institutions in 28 countries have plans to develop more programmes, with 95% of the respondents reporting that joint and double degree programmes are part of their institution's internationalisation strategy.

The development and implementation of joint programmes is mentioned in several European and national educational strategy papers, and also in the internationalisation strategies of individual higher education institutions (HEIs).

The INTERUV project has conducted a survey in 14 European countries, to trace the visibility of joint programmes in institutional strategies. The results are available on its website.

## 3.4.    Regional and national initiatives financing joint programmes

Several regional and national initiatives highlight the strategic importance given to the joint programmes as instruments to increase the internationalisation of the higher education sector. Regional financing instruments include, among others, the Nordic Masters programme funded by the Nordic Council of Ministers, the Mediterranean Office for Youth, and the Pan-African University funded by the African Union.

Examples of nationally funded bilateral initiatives are the French-Italian University, the Finnish-Russian Cross-Border University, and the German-Dutch EUREGIO programme.

In some countries (such as Norway), separate national government support is available to develop joint programmes, and in some cases the European structural funds can be used for this purpose.

## 3.5.    Sources

**Key sources**

Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency, European Commission, EU programmes' Executive Agency homepage.

Erasmus Mundus, EMQA Erasmus Mundus Quality Assessment 2012, Handbook of Excellence Doctoral Programmes. Brussels, Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency, 2012, p.66.

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Kuder, M., and D. Obst. Joint and double degree programs in the transatlantic context, Institute of International Education & Freie Universitaet Berlin, 2009.

Kuroda, K., Y. Takako & K. Kyuwon. Cross-border higher education for regional integration and labor market in East Asia, ASEAN, 2010.

Kuroda, K. 'Cross-border higher education in ASEAN plus three: Results of JICA-RI surveys on leading universities and cross-border collaborative degree programs', PowerPoint presentation given at the International Asia-Europe Conference on Enhancing Balanced mobility, Bangkok, 5-6 March 2012.

Matross Helms, R. Mapping International Joint and Dual Degrees: U.S. Program Profiles and Perspectives, American Council on Education, Washington D.C., 2014.

# 4. The Legal Framework

This chapter describes the European and national legal contexts and the initiated transparency processes. After taking a short look at the European Union, national legislative power is considered in more detail, followed by the inter-governmental Bologna cooperation and agreements.

## 4.1.    Key messages for practitioners

1. The legal power related to the implementation of international joint programmes lies at the level of national or sub-national authorities (ministries of education).

2. In addition to the national legislative framework, the institutional guidelines and regulations of the partner HEIs have to be taken into account when planning joint programme cooperation.

3. There are several important transparency tools / projects / facilitating processes:
   - recognition of qualifications:
     - Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC);
     - The European Area of Recognition (EAR) manual;
   - Guidelines for Good Practice for Awarding Joint Degrees to HEIs;
   - recognition of accreditation decisions:
     - Multilateral Agreement on the Mutual Recognition of Accreditation Results regarding Joint Programmes (MULTRA).

4. The following relevant information related to joint programmes can be found through the ENIC-NARIC network:
   - information on the legal status of the partner institution;
   - the degree-awarding rights of the partner institution;
   - advice on the future recognition of the jointly awarded degree;
   - advice on modalities of joint issuing of diplomas.

## 4.2.    EU competences in higher education

The European Union influences higher education policy through political cooperation. Since the adoption of the Lisbon Strategy in 2000, political cooperation in education has been strengthened – first by the 'Education and Training 2010' work programme, followed by the strategy for European cooperation in education and training 'ET 2020'. This cooperation has led to the formulation of common targets and initiatives, which are supported by a number of funding programmes, such as the Lifelong Learning Programme 2007-13, Erasmus Mundus 2009-13 and the Erasmus+ programme that has replaced all the existing initiatives in 2014. Funding bodies, such as the European Commission, have no legislative power within the educational sector. Funding scheme rules on admission, selection, tuition fees et cetera are subordinated to national legislation.

The European Commission provides information and a [database on regulated professions](#) within the EU internal market, as well as updates on current directives and harmonisation measures.

## The European Qualifications Framework, EQF

[The European Qualifications Framework](#) is an EU initiative, which acts as a translation device to make national qualifications more readable across Europe. The EQF aims to relate national qualifications systems of different countries to a common European reference framework. The EQF applies to all types of education, training and qualifications, from school education to academic, professional and vocational. Levels of national qualifications are placed at one of the central reference levels, ranging from basic (Level 1) to advanced (Level 8).

The higher education bachelor-level cycle corresponds to the learning outcomes for EQF level 5-6. The master-level cycle corresponds to the learning outcomes for EQF level 7 and the doctoral-level cycle to EQF level 8.

The Framework for Qualifications in the EHEA comprises three cycles, generic descriptors for each cycle, based on learning outcomes and competences, and credit ranges in the first and second cycles. The first, bachelor-level, cycle ranges from 180-240 ECTS credits and the second, master-level, cycle from 90-120 ECTS credits.

## ECTS credit transfer and accumulation system

Several institutions offering a joint programme have adopted the European Credit Transfer and accumulation System (ECTS). One year within the ECTS system equals 60 credits with one credit equalling 25-30 hours of work, including self-study.

The ECTS Users' Guide has recently been revised and is in the process of being discussed in the Bologna Follow-Up Group. It is likely to be approved by the Ministerial Meeting in Yerevan in 2015.

Some care must be taken when using the ECTS grading scheme for the conversion of grades within a joint programme, as difficulties may arise. One difficulty is that the ECTS scale has a statistical basis and depends on the population of students to be considered. Unless all students are registered at all the participating consortium institutions (even at the universities they may never visit), the student population in the joint programme will be different at each partner university, and one student may end up with two conflicting final grades in two different institutions. The joint registration of all students at all the partner universities will solve this issue, but this may not be possible in all cases, e.g. when there are two universities in the same country and/or when national legislation does not allow a student to be registered in more than one country.

The [EGRACONS project](#) is also interesting. This EU-co-funded project that runs from 2012 to 2015 is developing a European Grade Conversion System. The project aims to develop a user-friendly web-based tool for grade conversion that will be made available to all European higher education institutions on a voluntary basis, enabling a transparent interpretation of students' accomplishments. The EGRACONS project aims to stay as closely as possible to the general instructions of the [2009 ECTS Users' Guide](#) on how to prepare grading tables (based on frequency tables).

## 4.3.    National legislative power and institutional regulations

Even though joint programmes have an international character, it is important to bear in mind that the legal power related to higher education policy and the implementation of joint programmes lies within the national or sub-national legislation and applies also to international cooperation activities. It is therefore important to first and foremost carefully check national regulations and not only European regulation. Higher education policy is developed and implemented at the national level by the relevant ministry of education or science.

Information on national higher education systems in Europe can be found through Eurydice and the ENIC-NARICs.

### National Qualifications Frameworks

All countries of the European Higher Education Area had committed to developing National Qualifications Frameworks compatible with the overarching framework of the European Higher Education Area by 2010. This commitment was undertaken in 2005 but the 2012 stocktaking report indicated that this is a field where considerable work remains to be done.

The Ploteus website provides a tool for comparative views of national qualifications frameworks.

### Ensuring the legal status and the degree-awarding power of the partner HEIs

Before entering into joint programme cooperation, it should be established whether the institution is authorised to award qualifications that are accepted for academic and professional purposes in the home country, or, where applicable, also in other countries potentially relevant for future programme graduates.

The European Area of Recognition Manual for higher education institutions (EAR HEI) presents guidelines on checking the status of the institution (p.25) and lists relevant information sources. If the requested information cannot be found in the available resources, HEIs should contact the competent authority in a given country, such as the ENIC-NARIC centres.

It is important to also check the institutional guidelines of all partner institutions related to degree awarding, i.e. whether a certain minimum period of enrolment or physical stay at the degree-awarding institutions is required, and whether multiple enrolment (i.e. enrolment at more than one institution) is allowed in the national and institutional context.

### Ensuring the legality of the programme offered / accreditation

Accreditation of individual study programmes is required in some countries, but for example not in all European countries. There are variations in accreditation procedures, in criteria, in the cost, in the length and the nature of the decision (conditional/unconditional). In 2010 some European countries (members of the European Consortium for Accreditation in higher education - ECA) launched the Multilateral Agreement on the Mutual Recognition of Accreditation Results regarding Joint Programmes (MULTRA). This agreement should facilitate the accreditation of international joint programmes. Refer to chapter 7 for more information about this topic.

In countries where individual programme accreditation is not required, the higher education institution is responsible for continuous quality monitoring of the programme and is usually reviewed by the national quality assurance agency.

### Financing and tuition fees

There are great variations within and between countries regarding higher education funding and tuition fee policies, which are guided by national legislation and institutional rules. You can find information on tuition fees and student support systems in European countries through Eurydice (see the Eurydice Report 2012 on fees and support for higher education).

### Quality assurance systems

The processes for ensuring quality within the higher education system vary from one country to another. One distinction is whether the main focus of quality assurance is on institutions, on programmes, or on both. Another distinction is between internal and external quality assurance. Information on approaches within internal and external quality assurance within the 47 Bologna countries can be found in the Bologna Process Implementation Report 2012. More details on quality assurance in joint programmes are available in Chapter 7 of this guide.

### ENQA Standards and Guidelines

The European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) was established in 2004 with the aim to promote European cooperation in the field of quality assurance in higher education.

The European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) were developed as part of the Bologna Process and adopted by European ministers of higher education in 2005. The ESG consist of three parts, covering:

- internal quality assurance;
- external quality assurance;
- external reviews by quality assurance agencies.

A revised version of the ESG, approved by the Bologna Follow-up Group (BFUG), is to be presented at the Bologna meeting in Yerevan in May 2015.

### Legal situation on awarding joint degrees and issuing joint diplomas

Issuing a single joint diploma after completion of the joint programme is legally possible in some countries, and according to institutional regulations of some higher education institutions. It is important to check national legislation on this point already during the planning phase of the joint programme cooperation, in order to ensure the legal status of the awarded degree and to ensure degree recognition for future graduates. The most reliable information on the modalities of awarding degrees and issuing diplomas can be obtained from the ministries of education or the ENIC-NARIC-centres and found in the institutional regulations of the partner institutions.

The Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA), which is responsible for implementing the Joint Master's Degree component of the Erasmus+ programme, regularly

posts updates on the situation regarding awarding joint degrees and issuing joint diplomas on its [Joint degree website](.).

### Student admission

In joint programmes, even though there is often a joint selection body/consortium, the admission decision needs to comply with national and institutional guidelines, unless exceptions exist for joint programmes. Adhering to national legal admission requirements is particularly important in order to guarantee that the awarded degrees will be recognised. As a general rule, it is recommended that the joint admission criteria meet the requirements of the strictest partner, provided they do not clash with national or institutional criteria.

### Institutional guidelines

In addition to adhering to the national legislative framework, HEIs developing joint programmes should also take into consideration the institutional guidelines. Several HEIs have elaborated institutional guidelines on setting up international joint programmes.

In many countries HEIs have institutional autonomy, so it is vital to consult these guidelines in relation to student admission, assessments, credits and diplomas. Ask your (potential) partners if they have guidelines and share their guidelines and your own with all (potential) consortium partners.

## 4.4.    Inter-governmental cooperation and agreements

### The Bologna Process

For information on joint programmes as part of the inter-governmental Bologna Process, [see section 3.2](.).

### The joint Diploma Supplement

The European Diploma Supplement is a document attached to a higher education diploma aimed at improving transparency and facilitating recognition. It describes the nature, level, context, content and status of the studies that were successfully completed by the individual named on the original diploma to which this supplement is appended.

The tool was initiated by UNESCO and jointly revised by UNESCO, the European Commission and the Council of Europe. Graduates in all the countries taking part in the Bologna Process are entitled to automatically receive the Diploma Supplement in a 'major' European language.

The joint programme partnership is advised to issue a joint Diploma Supplement, including information on the jointness of the educational offer (see ECA's [Guidelines for Good Practice for Awarding Joint Degrees](.), 2014).

### Recognition of degrees awarded by joint programmes

According to [The Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region (The Lisbon Recognition Convention - LRC)](.), adopted in

1997, recognition is 'a formal acknowledgement by a competent authority of the value of a foreign educational qualification with a view to access to educational and/or employment activities'.

Over 50 countries have already ratified the LRC, developed by the Council of Europe and UNESCO. In addition to European countries, it has been signed by e.g. Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the United States. The LRC covers academic recognition and promotes academic mobility by facilitating the recognition of qualifications, students' access to further studies and credit transfers between higher education institutions. The LRC stipulates that qualifications must be recognised unless substantial differences can be proved. The Committee overseeing the implementation of the LRC has, among other things, adopted a Recommendation on the Recognition of Joint Degrees in 2004.

In April 2012, the ministers of education of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) recommended the use of the European Area of Recognition Manual for higher education institutions (EAR HEI), including information on recognition of qualifications awarded by joint programmes on p.66. This chapter is further elaborated on in the Framework for Fair Recognition of Joint Degrees.

The Erasmus Mundus Cluster Workshop (2012) on recognition of joint degrees also offers a relevant overview of recognition of joint degrees.

For practical guidelines on recognition of joint degrees, see Chapter 8 of this Guide.


## 4.5.  Sources

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# 5. Joint programme development

This chapter deals with important issues that have to be taken into account at an early stage of the development phase. First, it presents the reasons for entering into joint programmes, the importance of institutional strategic support and tools for authorising the programmes. Second, it addresses partnership, joint curriculum development, defining common learning outcomes and designing a relevant mobility track. Third, it mentions issues to include in a cooperation agreement.

## 5.1. Key messages for practitioners

1. Institutions must clearly define their reasons for entering into joint programme cooperation, the academic added value and wider relevance of the intended learning outcomes. Start with an idea, find a niche and be innovative.

2. To be successful, a joint programme must be anchored in your institution's strategy and internationalisation policy.

3. Be aware of the screening and authorisation process of joint programmes at the higher education institutions involved.

4. Institutional support (strategic and practical) and flexibility at all levels within your institution are crucial. This support must be secured at the start of the development phase.

5. Know the national and institutional regulations of your institution and your partner institutions.

6. Select partners based on their academic expertise, mutual trust (through open communication and a shared understanding), and institutional strategic commitment. Know your partner institutions' academic and administrative strengths and weaknesses.

7. Develop a full-cost budgeting from the beginning, including running costs.

8. Jointly define the need for the programme, the learning outcomes and length of the programme. Jointly develop the joint curricula, consider recognition and access to further studies. Define the level of integration and anticipate degree awarding.

9. Develop a robust, clear and flexible cooperation agreement that delineates responsibilities, expected outcomes, and other relevant parameters.

10. A clear definition of your target students will contribute to the overall quality of the programme, not only academically but also with regard to visa, marketing and admission procedures.

> 11. When developing new joint programmes, early contact with non-academic partners is important (i) to formulate learning outcomes in relation to employability, (ii) to include labour-market elements into the curricula, and (iii) to explore potential financial cooperation to ensure programme sustainability.

## 5.2. Reasons for developing joint programmes.

### Reasons for institutions

Institutions considering developing joint programmes must ask themselves *why* they wish to develop joint programmes, what the added value will be, and to which extent joint programmes help to realise the institutional strategy. It is also useful to consider the added value of joint degree programmes compared to double or other multiple degree programmes. Joint degree programmes may take more effort to develop, but are, therefore, also seen as a deeper form of internationalisation.

The main reasons for higher education institutions to develop joint programmes are the following:

At the institutional level, to:

- raise the international visibility and reputation of the institution;
- increase global student recruitment and the level of internationalisation;
- raise institutional revenue by increasing foreign student enrolments;
- deepen and institutionalise cooperation with consortium partners and establish more sustainable strategic relationships;
- build networks of excellence to strengthen (strategic) international research collaboration.

At the programme level, to:

- broaden or deepen education offering;
- develop a more internationalised curriculum, in the realisation that a truly international/European course cannot be delivered by one institution or institutions from one country;
- strengthen strategic partnerships with other regions in the world;
- improve the quality of the curriculum (and of research elements in the case of joint doctoral programmes);
- offer a specialist, innovative curriculum by combining the education and research strengths of individual institutions (so that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts);
- increase cross-cultural competencies of students and staff, not only through mobility, but also by enhancing internationalisation at home;
- improve graduate employability through curricula that respond to labour-market demand (preparation for an increasingly global labour market, e.g. through cross-cultural competencies);
- raise the international visibility and prestige of the course programme;
- provide an important label of quality that strengthens an interdisciplinary case for funding from other sources;
- attract new groups/nationalities of target students;

- gain access to the expertise of a partner institution and its research networks, thus providing critical mass and a basis for strengthening research collaboration.

## Benefits for academics

Reasons for academic staff to become involved in joint programmes are that these programmes – either through staff mobility or incoming student mobility – offer them:

- opportunities to learn about other contexts and teaching and learning methods;
- student diversity in the classroom;
- networks for future teaching collaboration;
- research contacts;
- professional development opportunities;
- intercultural competences.

## Benefits for students

The main benefit for students is to take advantage of an international jointly developed curriculum, combining academic expertise available in different countries through a study programme guaranteeing automatic recognition of the period spent abroad.

Some students believe that a joint programme is of higher quality than a common single degree programme, given that the expertise of more than one institution has shaped the academic programme.

Others are interested in gaining 'two degrees for the price of one'. Moreover, an advantage of a joint programme over a regular study abroad experience is that there is no time loss or risk that credits are not accepted. There seems to be a sense of elitism attached to having academic degrees from universities in different countries. For doctoral (and some master) candidates, joint programmes offer good opportunities to cooperate with high-quality researchers with complementary knowledge and skills, to enter into new academic networks, and to work in a part of the world that matches their interests.

## Region-specific reasons

The reasons for developing joint programmes can vary between regions, countries and institutions. To give a few examples:

The institutional reasons for developing joint programmes are generally the same for both European and US institutions. However, institutions in the United States are more likely to join a consortium for revenue purposes, compared to their European counterparts.

At the European level, joint programmes are encouraged to enhance internal European higher education cooperation, to increase the attractiveness of the European region and to promote cooperation with other regions in the world. This is encouraged, for instance, through funding programmes such as the previous Erasmus Mundus programme, the current Joint Master Degrees under Erasmus+, and the joint programme initiatives with industrialised countries. For higher education institutions in Europe, improving graduate employability through joint programmes is an important rationale that is less prevalent in other regions.

For Latin American universities, the main reasons for developing joint programmes are internationalisation of the curriculum, increasing student mobility, raising student employability and enlarging educational offer.

Despite the recent introduction of joint programmes in China, they have witnessed significant growth thanks to government support and public demand. The Chinese government in particular, has tried to attract high-quality educational programmes (including joint programme partners) to China in areas where there is a gap in domestic public higher education courses.

Joint programmes contribute to capacity building of institutions in developing countries, help improve the quality of teaching and research, and establish networks between the North and the South.

## 5.3. Institutional strategies and guidelines

Clear institutional strategies and guidelines on joint degree development can be useful. Although a top-down approach is not the only way to a fruitful cooperation, a central approach does generally strengthen staff and funding commitment, making it easier to successfully and efficiently develop joint programmes within an organisation.

In 2013, the INTERUV project has conducted a survey in 14 European countries, to trace the visibility of joint programmes in institutional strategies. The survey results are available through their website.

The JOIMAN network has also done research into the state of affairs of institutional strategies in relation to the development of joint programmes. In its guidelines, the network indicates that only half of the 36 higher education institutions surveyed have a strategic policy to develop joint programmes.

According to the 2014 study by the American Council on Education, nearly half of survey respondents reported that international collaborative degrees are mentioned in strategic planning documents or are currently being incorporated into such documents. However, only 15 percent indicated that their institutions have a *specific* policy in place that encourages the development of international joint degrees, and 18 percent reported a policy to encourage dual degrees.

### Importance of institutional commitment

Institutional commitment is one of the cornerstones of the sustainability of a joint programme throughout the development and implementation phase. The personal commitment of individual academic staff may sometimes be the starting point for a joint programme, but without institutional support at all levels most such initiatives will be short lived. The University of Bergen (Norway), for instance, has anchored joint degrees in university legislation. In Bergen, the development of joint programmes is mainly a departmental responsibility, with the central offices assisting by providing funding. Graz University (Austria) made joint programmes one of the cornerstones of its internationalisation policy. By providing funding and clear regulations, and specifically allocating staff members to joint programmes, these programmes are firmly anchored within the university.

In its Guidelines for Quality Enhancement in European Joint Master Programmes, EUA (2006) underlines the importance of institutional commitment. This starts at the beginning of the development process of a new programme, and is sealed in a formal contract between the

partners. It is important to pave the path to a sound quality culture by creating an atmosphere of joint commitment of all partners at all levels.

The Erasmus Mundus quality assurance tool presents good practices and examples of developing a realistic institutional strategy.

## Screening and authorising joint programmes

At some point, most institutions will come across staff proposals to develop a joint programme. Being prepared to properly assess their merits is important and will support successful implementation and sustainability. A good example is the US-based Rice University, which has developed a special screening and authorisation process to help the university describe and evaluate a programme. The description of this process, the lessons learnt, and the list of questions addressed are all examples for other institutions. Rice University's list of questions in the screening process focuses on 14 elements that need to be considered:

1. the rationale behind the joint programme;
2. the curriculum;
3. the partner institution(s);
4. students and academic standards;
5. learning;
6. faculty and courses;
7. resources;
8. financial support;
9. administration and programme governance;
10. degree requirements for the general announcements;
11. the launch of the programme;
12. academic support;
13. potential liabilities and other risks;
14. measures of progress and success.

Rice University's screening process is geared towards meeting multiple objectives:

- ensuring that all important factors have been considered;
- increasing the strategic alignment of individual initiatives with central university priorities;
- maintaining shared governance;
- reducing unnecessary work in the proposal-writing stage;
- increasing buy-in across the campus;
- reducing the set-up time of the programme.

## EMQA checklist for creating a comprehensive course vision

The Erasmus Mundus Quality Assurance (EMQA) project describes the need for a comprehensive vision of both joint master and doctoral programmes. A comprehensive, seven-point overview is available in the guide. The seven main points are:

- identify the unique selling proposition of running a joint programme, including the type of consortium and the academic content;
- further develop the description of the rationale and the mobility paths;
- work on a sustainability strategy;
- develop a common vision on shared cultures, both academic and administrative;

- work on a thorough employability strategy for candidates;
- agree upon the examination process, taking into consideration transparency;
- agree upon the degree awarded and maximise its recognition.

## 5.4.    Partnership, legality of the programme, students

### Selecting partners

Partners in a joint programme should first and foremost be chosen on the basis of a complementary, specific academic expertise that enriches the joint educational offer. Other important aspects to consider are: mutual trust, commitment, open communication, administrative support and possible access to new student markets. Remember that you can also include *associated* partners who only participate in parts of the programme, e.g. through external lecturing, offering internships or financing scholarships. The more partners in a consortium, the harder it can be to coordinate collaboration and the higher the need is for formal organisational structures.

Large consortia offering joint programmes often started off with a small number of partners. There seems to be a trend among most existing joint degree programmes to involve not more than two institutions. The EUA report gives a brief overview of a couple of common features of joint master (degree) programmes that are developed by either larger (> 10 institutions) or smaller networks (up to 7 institutions).

It is also helpful to determine the nature of the partners in the consortium by naming key factors they should meet, such as: familiarity with the partners, resources, reliability and administrative capacity.

The JOI.CON guide stresses the importance of knowing beforehand both the partners and the regulations of the countries involved. The JOI.CON Annex includes Comparison Table examples that may help institutions explore potential obstacles to joint programmes beforehand.

The EUA Joint Masters report describes partner selection as crucial for new joint masters programmes. Elements to take into consideration are: communication and mutual trust, the development of learning objectives, and recognition issues. The number and type of partners and their level of commitment are also important factors.

A study by Matthias Kuder and Daniel Obst has found that institutions normally select their joint programme partners through existing exchange partnerships or academic contacts. Sometimes, however, institutions choose partners as part of a larger strategic decision to focus on a particular area in the world or field of study.

### Ensuring the legality of the joint programme offered

When developing the joint curricula and programme, it is important to be fully aware of national legal frameworks and institutional requirements on all aspects of running and implementing a study programme.

That process should cover at least the following aspects:

- ensuring the legal status of all partner institutions involved;
- ensuring the legal status of the degrees proposed as part of the joint programme;
- checking national and institutional regulations related to jointly awarding degrees;

- checking national and institutional regulations on the content of the programme, such as minimum length of the dissertation/thesis, requirements of labour-market related elements, and dissertation/thesis defence;
- ensuring that appropriate national admission requirements are being adhered to;
- in terms of students rights, checking that national tuition fee requirements are being met.

For more detailed information and references, go to Chapter 4 on the legal framework.

### Identifying target students

Defining the target group of a joint programme generally seems to result in the distinction between EU and non-EU students. Sometimes, target students are identified based on social-economic aspects. Selecting a target group for a joint programme is a delicate and strategic exercise as it is closely connected to finances. Attracting students from all over the world requires well-defined marketing plans, investments and fundraising activities in order to sustain the programme.

Institutions often see joint programmes with non-European universities as a way to enhance their attractiveness and increase the number of non-EU students. This concept is more and more becoming part of the institutional strategy.

The EUA report on developing joint masters in Europe addresses the impact of socio-economic conditions on the admission of students to joint programmes: mechanisms are needed to facilitate more equal opportunities. Participation should depend on students' potential to gain benefit from the opportunities joint programmes offer, not on their socio-economic background. Joint programmes in Europe tend to be dominated by middle-class students as they require significant financial contributions from the students themselves. There are, however, a number of countries where students are not required to pay tuition fees, such as (at the time of writing) Germany and Sweden.

## 5.5.    Joint curriculum development

The Erasmus Mundus Quality Assurance (EMQA) tool provides a checklist of actions and good practice in relation to integrated learning outcomes, programme pedagogy, balancing learning and teaching, and assessment mechanisms.

### Academic and labour market relevance of the joint educational offer

Even though the rationale and academic and labour market relevance of a joint programme should be the guiding principle, academic and labour market relevance seems to be a topic that is not often explicitly addressed in references to the development of joint programmes.

Academic and labour market relevance is, however, an important theme within the EU funding schemes. In the current Erasmus+ Joint Master's Degree selection (2014-2020), the relevance criteria are separately assessed during the first selection phase. Partnerships applying for funding are asked to justify the proposed cooperation in terms of academic relevance, employability, inter- or multidisciplinary emerging fields and added value compared to existing programmes.

In many countries, the national accreditation decision also strongly focuses on the relevance and added value of proposed new joint programmes.

It is, hence, advisable to look for, involve and consult non-academic stakeholders within your subject field during the development phase, to ensure that the joint programme you are planning is relevant to the labour market, society or research. JOIMAN stresses the importance of engaging private sector contacts from the beginning of the development trajectory, in order to secure financial reserves or other means to sustain the programme.

An excellent and very practical website is that of the European Commission's Cluster on Employability, which contains practical guidelines with relevant examples of good practice on activities supporting the employability of Erasmus Mundus students and alumni.

The Erasmus Mundus graduate survey mentions that Erasmus Mundus students based their success in finding employment on academic rather than practical experience gained during the programme, and might profit from a more balanced approach of practical as well as academic modules.

In the 2009 EUA survey, when asked about employer involvement during the curriculum design stage, more than half of the surveyed institutions indicated that this had not been the case – although one of the major incentives to develop the courses was relevance to the labour market. Only about ten percent had requested feedback from employers. Employers themselves are sometimes unaware of what higher education institutions have to offer. Only if enterprises are convinced that their participation in curriculum development is of great interest to them, can dialogues with institutions flourish.


## Learning outcomes and the European Qualifications Framework

The European approach to curriculum development is soundly based on student-centred learning and identifying learning outcomes, instead of only listing teaching content and methodology. The learning outcomes are introduced both through two qualification frameworks and the thematic approach through the Tuning project.

The Qualification Framework for the European Higher Education Area (QF EHEA) is an overarching framework that has been adopted in 2005. The member countries have developed national qualifications frameworks that are compatible with the QF EHEA.

The QF EHEA comprises three cycles, including generic descriptors for each cycle, based on learning outcomes and competences, and credit ranges in the first and second cycles. The EHEA framework is based on the Dublin Descriptors (2004).

The European Qualifications Framework (EQF) has been adopted by the European Union in 2008. The EQF is a meta qualifications framework consisting of 8 levels comprising all education levels. National qualification frameworks (NQFs) can be referenced to the EQF to provide transparency and offer comparability of NQFs on a general level. The EQF, like the QF EHEA, developed descriptors for all levels. In principle, the EQF levels 6, 7, 8 are similar to the QF-EHEA cycles 1, 2 and 3.

In their Guide to formulating degree programme profiles, Lokhoff et al. (2010) describe the concept of 'degree profile', within the context of the Bologna Process, as an essential tool for communication about, and transparency and recognition of a degree. Degree profiles consist of Programme Competences and Learning Outcomes, where a competence "is a quality, ability, capacity or skill developed by and belonging to the student". A learning outcome is "a

measurable result of a learning experience, which allows us to ascertain to which extent / level / standard a competence has been formed or enhanced". The guide offers templates and manuals on how to formulate learning outcomes, interlaced with examples.

The manual of the EAR-project contains a separate chapter on the recognition of future degrees of joint programmes. It describes how credential evaluators should evaluate the learning outcomes in the degree recognition process.

As a requirement of European funding, such as the Erasmus Mundus programme or the current Erasmus+ programmes, a joint partnership has to define joint learning outcomes for the entire joint programme, to be fulfilled regardless of where the students start their courses. The JOIMAN survey showed that over 80% of responding institutions define the learning outcomes of joint programmes as a whole at the consortium level.

## Tuning

The Tuning methodology has a thematic, learning outcomes-based approach and is a platform to develop reference points at the subject area level. Tuning worked with 9 subject areas (Business, Chemistry, Earth Sciences, Education, European Studies, History, Mathematics, Nursing and Physics) and the guidelines on identifying competences and setting learning outcomes can be very useful in joint programmes.

The Tuning approach is characterised as follows:

1. Description of the programme objectives and the learning outcomes in terms of knowledge, understanding, skills and abilities;
2. Identification of the generic and subject-specific competences that should be obtained in the programme;
3. Translation into the curriculum: content (topics to be covered) and structure (modules and credits);
4. Translation into educational units and activities to achieve the defined learning outcomes;
5. Deciding on the approaches to teaching and learning (types of methods, techniques, formats and, when required, the development of teaching materials), as well as the assessment methods;
6. Development of an evaluation system intended to continuously enhance its quality.

The Tuning project is embraced by Maierhofer and Kriebernegg's 'Graz Model' (2009) as useful in curriculum modularisation. A 2009 report of the German-Dutch EUREGIO project (by Nickel et al.) also recommends using the Tuning methodology as one of the tools to develop a joint programme. In addition, in his paper about double and joint business degrees, Schüle mentions learning outcomes as the tool to smoothen the cooperation in a double degree programme when recognising credits from another institution, and gives examples.

## Designing an academically relevant mobility track

It is important to have an academically relevant mobility track in place for both students and lecturers. Both the student and staff mobility tracks are depending first and foremost on the learning outcomes of the programme, the academic relevance and added value of a particular path, on which HEIs are degree-awarding, and on their institutional guidelines. The Erasmus Mundus Quality Assurance (EMQA) tool provides a checklist of actions and good practice in

relation to how the student mobility pathways can be developed to match the intended learning outcomes.

Good practice is to define different mobility models and jointly discuss their positive and negative aspects. The mobility models can be based on student choice or be defined by the partner HEIs.

There are several models of international student mobility in joint programmes:

1. Students can travel together as a group, starting in one location and transferring to another;
2. Students can start their studies at different locations and then merge with the others at one or more participating institutions;
3. Students are individually mobile, collecting credits as they like at different universities that do not have exactly the same curriculum.

JOIMAN elaborates on this, and considers four models of student mobility:

1. Programmes with common courses offered by some or all universities, where students can start the programme, plus one mobility period for specialising one-semester courses, with students returning to their home institutions for the research period;
2. 'Trip programmes', with fixed mobility and with all students starting at the same institution. Students are together from the beginning to the end of the programme;
3. 'Bilateral mobility programmes', where students spend one year at the starting institution and one year in the second institution, including dissertation/thesis research. The mobility options are either fixed (depending on the starting institutions) or free;
4. Programmes with joint intensive modules: in this model, students can have mobility periods on the basis of the above models, and an intensive residential module, usually organised outside the lecture periods, in which all students are together.

The 2013 EACEA synthesis report on experiences of the Erasmus Mundus courses, states that most programmes organised programme-level events, such as rotating Summer or Winter Schools or workshops so that each partner could benefit from networking through the mobility of teaching staff, visiting scholars and students. Those Erasmus Mundus courses that combine jointly developed academic provision with several mobility tracks and professional internships, as well as activities bringing all students together, appear to achieve the highest European added value and successfully build on effective horizontal cooperation.

## Examples of mobility structures

This section gives examples of four models of international student mobility within joint programmes.

**Model 1.** Students are moving together from partner A to B to C, with common curricula for all. Creates a feeling of togetherness among the students, but offers no specialisation.
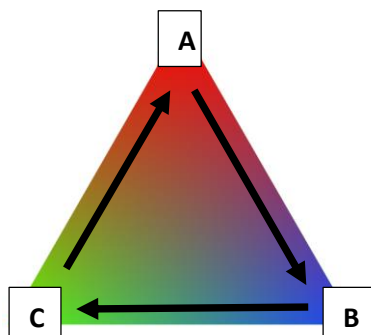


**Model 2.** This model shows several possible mobility paths, allowing specialisation tracks.

Students start together at partner A, move to different locations (B, C or D) for the second mobility (allowing specialisations), and finally either go back to partner A, or go to finalise the dissertation/thesis at a third partner.
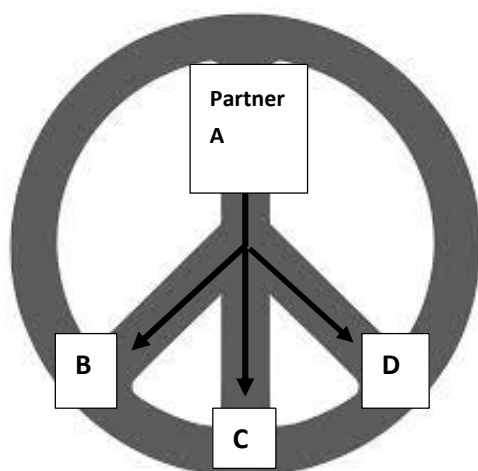


**Model 3.** A more complicated model, allowing several special mobility tracks. In this model, students start at different locations but there are still common components, as well as a connection between the home/starting university and the final hosting university through joint dissertation/thesis supervision.
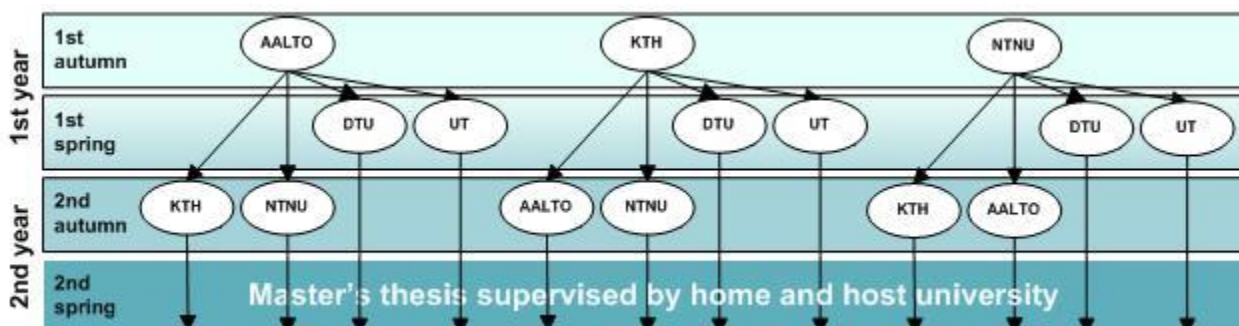
**Model 4.** The final model presents a tight mobility pattern, where students go to four or five destinations within two years. The students are represented by 'X'. In this example, all students start at university A and then go together to university B, after which they are free to choose a university to do their internship. In the second year, they all start together at university C and can choose from universities A, B and D to complete their last semester.

| | 1st Semester | 2nd Semester | Internship | 3rd Semester | 4th Semester |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Partner A | X | | X | | X |
| Partner B | | X | X | | X |
| Partner C | | | X | X | |
| Partner D | | | X | | X |
| Partner E | | | X | | |
| Partner F | | | X | | |

### Academic calendar

A different setup of academic years can present problems for student mobility. On the other hand, different academic calendars provide more opportunities for faculty exchange. Differences in academic calendars can be a real barrier for student mobility and solving mobility issues requires detailed collaboration between partners. JOIMAN's survey shows that about twenty percent of the responding institutions find the period of enrolment an issue due to different academic calendars.

Flexible solutions are required when dealing with different academic calendars: sometimes Summer Schools are organised, or distance learning is offered as an option. Others adjust the course duration, e.g. by lengthening or shortening the semester. A lot depends on staff willingness to leave their normal calendar behind them and start, for instance, early, before the official start of the academic year.

### Financial planning

As for financial planning, it is important to:

- prepare a reliable budget plan already at the development stage;
- look for different financial resources;

- prepare the plan and agree on the distribution of funds among the consortium members.

The EMQA project presents valuable information on setting up realistic financial strategies, with good practice and examples, covering both master and doctoral levels.

Having continued funding is a crucial element to sustain the running of a joint programme in the long term. Without additional funding for a joint programme coordinator or assistant, some institutions find it difficult to meet the additional workload that joint programmes normally generate. The JOIMAN report indicates that half of the 89 surveyed institutions had not reserved any revenues to ensure the sustainability of their joint programme. Most institutions surveyed indicated that they planned to re-apply to their funding source.

The JOI.CON training project gives an example of a full-cost calculation of a joint master (degree) programme, but note that this is a specific example that is not applicable to all contexts.

For more detailed information on resources, please turn to section 6.3 on financial management.

### Quality assurance in programme development

A tool that can be used during the development phase is the newly created Joint Programme Checklist, which is inspired by quality assurance and based on good practice found in several accreditation reports of the European Consortium for Accreditation (ECA).

JOIMAN mentions several suggestions for how to set up a quality assurance system. They range from adopting the ENQA standards and setting up a joint evaluation structure with a joint board, students and a quality assurance committee, to, for instance, the need to assure the flexibility of the curriculum. A more exhaustive list of tools can be found in Chapter 7.

### Recognition of the future degree

When setting up a joint programme, the consortium needs to identify various career options available for future graduates of the newly developed study programme. Consider at an early stage the future recognition of your degree. Check, for instance, the regulations on access to further studies or professions in all the partner countries.

Quality assurance of the joint master programme will add to broad recognition of the degree awarded. The EAR Manual contains a chapter on the recognition of joint qualifications with information for credential evaluators on how to assess a joint qualification.

The Erasmus Mundus Quality Assurance (EMQA) tool provides a checklist of actions and good practice in relation to degrees and degree recognition.

For further information and tools on recognition issues, please consult Chapter 8.

### 5.6. Cooperation agreements: content and templates

Draw up a cooperation agreement as early as possible and make it flexible as it will require frequent updating. A possible solution is a general and simple agreement with references to more detailed annexes. It is useful to include the following issues in the cooperation agreement:

1. Purpose and scope of the agreement;

2. Legal framework and national qualifications – documentation in annex;

3. Structure and organisation of the cooperation;

4. Programme structure (learning outcomes, course units, methodology, mobility);

5. Degree and diploma – template in annex;

6. Student admission, selection, registration and examination;

7. Financial management (including tuition fees, annex);

8. Quality assurance (annex);

9. Intellectual property rights;

10. Renewal, termination and amendment and resolution of disputes;

11. Application of law and dispute resolution.


The JOIMAN project has developed a [template](#) of cooperation agreements for joint programmes at master and doctoral level.

The [Erasmus Mundus Quality Assurance](#) (EMQA) tool provides a checklist of actions and good practice in relation to drafting consortium agreements.

The [EACEA website](#) for Erasmus Mundus Action 1 beneficiaries also provides templates for consortium agreements.


## 5.7.  Sources

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# 6. Joint programme management

This chapter focuses on how to manage the implementation of joint programmes. Several aspects are discussed: governance and management, cooperation agreements, financial management, marketing and administration, as well as quality assurance and recognition.

## 6.1. Key messages for practitioners

1.  There are no pre-defined management models; all joint programmes need to consider their specific context and develop their own suitable model. Identify all the partners (players) in the programme, identify their role and accommodate them in the management and governance structures of the programme (partners can include: degree or non-degree awarding HEIs, non-university partners, professional bodies, alumni, etc.).

2.  A joint programme should preferably be seen as mainstream educational offer and the partner HEIs should avoid creating new bodies that are not necessarily needed. Establish the management structure based on the *set of tasks for which joint arrangements are needed* as compared to regular programme administration:

    -   joint coordination and external representation of the consortium;
    -   joint development and monitoring of the academic content of the programme;
    -   joint quality assurance (academic and administrative; internal and external);
    -   joint financial administration and decisions;
    -   joint student administration (joint selection and complaints handling procedure);
    -   admission, registration, assessment, grading and examinations, transfer of credits, archiving of student records for future enquiries, etc.);
    -   joint promotion of the programme and joint student recruitment.

3.  Take into account the structure of the HEI (decentralised versus centralised), consider the pros and cons of different models in your cooperation. Examples of management models with organigrams are available through JOIMAN and JOI.CON (see section 6.2).

4.  Draw up a cooperation agreement as early as possible and make it flexible as it will require frequent updating. A possible solution is a general and simple agreement with references to more detailed annexes regulating different issues in the cooperation.

5.  Joint programmes impose extra costs and full-cost budgets must be calculated from the beginning. Arrangements for tuition fees, scholarships, cost-sharing and the financial sustainability of programmes need to be negotiated. In the case of tuition fees, different national regulations must be taken into account. Be aware of distinctions between home countries or nationalities when setting a fee policy.

6.  Develop a joint strategy on promotion and marketing, analysing relevant target audiences based on market research, review of relevant related 'feeding' study programmes (BA into MA), use alumni and partner networks, define your unique selling points.

7.  Awarding the degree is regulated by national legislation. Consulting the national ENIC-NARIC office is recommended when drafting the joint diploma and Diploma Supplement, to support future recognition of the degree.

8.  Global networking activities are essential to increase the awareness and visibility of the joint programme among future employers and enhance employability.

9.  It is important to involve non-academic, labour market actors in the planning and monitoring of the joint programme and, preferably, in internship provision.

## 6.2. Governance and management structures

It is important to consider how to form the governance and management structure of a joint programme because it determines how the roles, power and responsibilities are assigned, controlled and coordinated, and how information flows between the different management levels.

The governance and management structure depends on the strategic aims of the joint programme. In a centralised structure, the top management has most of the decision-making power, with tight control over players in the joint programme consortium. In a decentralised structure, the decision-making power is distributed and the partners may have different degrees of independence.

Only a minority (41%) of responding institutions have implemented additional structures to manage joint programmes, according to an IIE survey among 92 institutions in the EU and 81 in the U.S.

The JOIMAN report, based on a survey among 45 institutions, offers a chapter on the management and organisation of joint programmes. The report provides an overview of the involvement of different administrative units in the management of joint programmes and of the division of responsibilities among partners.

The JOIMAN report observes that the coordinating institution is usually in charge of receiving applications, sending letters of acceptance, financially monitoring the programme, and collecting and distributing fees. The consortium subsequently screens applications, decides on admission, organises the mobility, and issues the certificate. The partner institutions (at the central level) are in charge of enrolment, visas, accommodation, certification, delivery of the degree certificate and the diploma supplement; and (at faculty/departmental level) the partner institutions are in charge of the organisation of extra-curricular activities, examination, Master dissertation/thesis, transfer of marks and of records.

ECA's Joint Programme Checklist recommends that each partner identify a person (or position) to act as the local coordinator and take responsibility for the joint programme within the institution. This local coordinator also acts as the main contact person for the other consortium partners.

The EMAP project (Erasmus Mundus Active Participation) offers several videos of coordinator presentations on course management issues.

## Examples of governance models

One example is the governance model of the Erasmus Mundus Master in Research and Innovation in Higher Education (MARIHE). This two-year joint programme is built on the expertise of four consortium partners: Danube University Krems (Austria; the coordinating institution), the University of Tampere (Finland), the University of Applied Sciences Osnabrück (Germany), and Beijing Normal University (China).

Figure 1 illustrates the governance model of the MARIHE Erasmus Mundus Master Course (EMMC), with an explanation of the members and the main tasks of each board. Characteristic of the MARIHE governance model is that each board (except the international advisory board) includes a representative from each consortium partner institution.

# Figure 1: Governance model of the MARIHE programme

**Members:**
One representative of each partner institution
**Main Tasks:**
Meets once a year and deals with the selection of students and invited scholars.

**Members:**
MARIHE academic directors (one from each partner), one representative of the faculty of EMMC, one student representative and one representative of the associated partners.
**Main Tasks:**
Monitors and improves the quality of EMMC.
Collaborates with the quality management units of all partners and with the national bodies dealing with quality assurance in HE.

**Main tasks:**
Coordinates EMMC;
Liaises with the European Commission and supervises the fulfillment of the contractual agreements;
Guides the MARIHE Joint Secretariat and chairs the Consortium Board.

**Members:**
The management of the courses, regarding administrative and practical issues;
Creates a 'road map' for the Consortium Board to guide the implementation of EMMC;
Defines work packages for every partner;
Provides the EMMC financial and administrative handbook.

**Members:**
One representative from every partner institution.
Is chaired by the representative of the Coordinating Institution.
**Main Tasks:**
Deals with all academic issues, programme development and promotion, quality issues and the principles of economy and administration.

**Members:**
Representatives of the associated partners and internationally recognised experts in the field of HE management and development.
**Main Tasks:**
Reviews the progress of the master course and has an advisory role aimed at ensuring the quality of the programme.

**Admission Board**

**Quality Board**

**Coordinating Institution**

**Consortium Board**

**Joint Secretariat**

**International Advisory Board**

More information on the program: www.marihe.eu

Another example is the governance model of the Erasmus Mundus Master in Security and Mobile Computing (NordSecMob). This joint programme is offered by Aalto University School of Sciences (Aalto, Finland), KTH Royal Institute of Technology (KTH, Sweden), the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU, Norway), the Technical University of Denmark (DTU, Denmark) and the University of Tartu (UT, Estonia). The two-year programme leads to a double degree from two universities.

Figure 2 illustrates the NordSecMob governance model. The NordSecMob consortium agreement does not specify which type of members form the Consortium Committee, but in practice, the committee is formed by one academic and one administrative representative of each partner institution. The Consortium Committee meets twice a year and takes joint decisions on all issues relating to the joint programme, including the tuition fee level and distribution, quality assurance of the programme, adaptation of the joint curriculum, and student admission standards, procedures and selection. The Consortium Committee selects students, but this selection decision is only final after the relevant body of each partner university has approved the selection. This highlights the importance of having a common understanding within the consortium on who has the mandate to take certain decisions.

**Figure 2: Governance model of the NordSecMob programme**
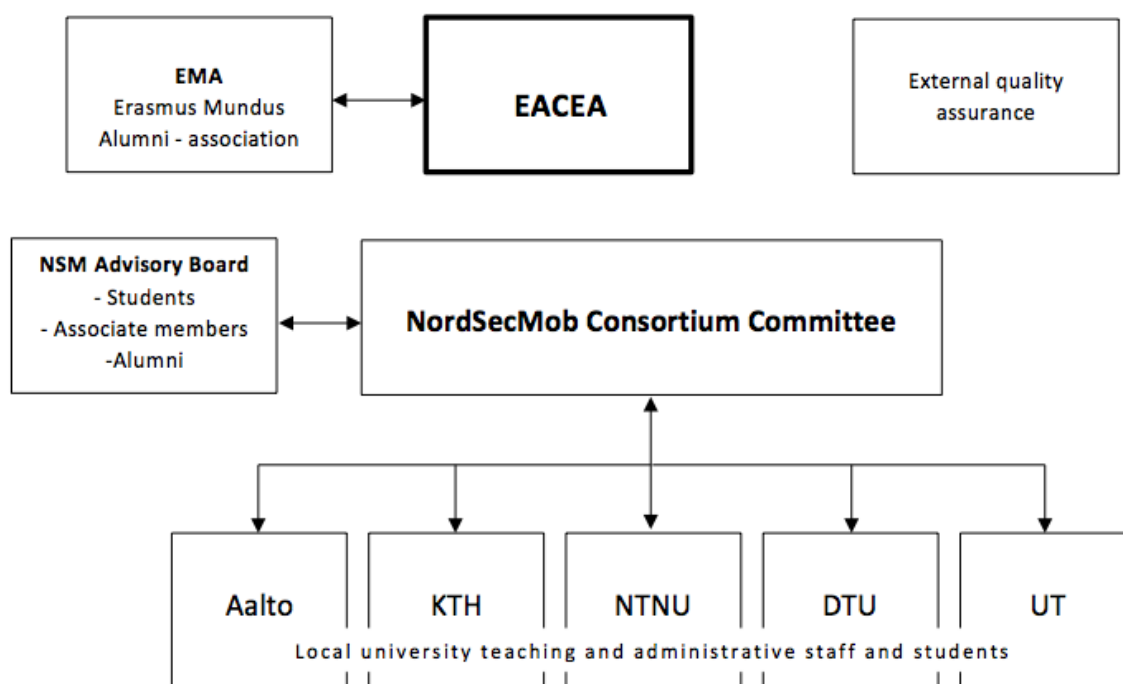


N.B. EACEA stands for the European Commission's Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency.

## 6.3.    Financial management

Joint programmes impose extra running costs for aspects such as joint curriculum development, marketing, mobility, assessments, administration, and relatively high costs of short-term accommodation. The implementation of a joint programme becomes complicated when multiple countries and partners with different tuition fee policies are involved. Arrangements for cost-sharing, tuition fees, scholarships and the sustainability of programmes

need to be negotiated. In situations where revenue generation is possible, it is necessary to sign an agreement for income distribution.

If the joint programme is funded by an external party, check for any specific rules and conditions that come with the provided funding. For instance, the existing differences between programme and partner countries in Erasmus+.

The Erasmus Mundus Quality Assurance (EMQA) tool provides a checklist of actions and good practice in relation to structuring human resources and setting up financial strategies.

It is important to set up a full-cost budget for the joint programme, including all running costs. The JOI.CON training project has developed an example of a full-cost calculation of a joint master (degree) programme (please note that this fictive example was developed to be applied in the particular context of this master programme and may not be fully transferable to another master programme context).

The EUA report (2008) on developing joint masters in Europe underlines the importance of proper funding procedures and distribution of resources as a critical factor for sustainability. Funding should be managed at programme level, allowing staff with relevant knowledge and experience to carry direct responsibility for financing.

The Erasmus Mundus Thematic Cluster on Sustainability provides an overview of how to achieve financial sustainability in its practical guidelines. It describes several routes, including sustainability through alternative financing, targeted dissemination and strong relationships with other Erasmus Mundus Courses.

## Tuition fees

In some cases, the extra investment needed to offer joint programmes can be raised by increasing tuition fees. It can be difficult to reach an agreement with partner institutions on tuition fees due to different national and/or institutional tuition fee policies. The EU funding schemes for joint programmes require a common tuition fee policy, which constitutes an added challenge to the existing legal situation. ECA's Joint Programme checklist includes tips on how to deal with tuition fees.

JOI.CON suggests that, apart from making a thorough inventory of the legal side of tuition fees in each participating county, institutions must try to raise awareness about the actual costs of a joint programme. The report contains several interesting tools to calculate fees (pp. 21-25).

Tuition fee levels and structures may vary for each programme. An IIE survey among 92 institutions in the EU and 81 in the U.S. found that the majority of European and US respondents (respectively 64% and 55%) indicated that students paid all fees for the entire programme to the home institution. U.S. respondents were more likely to have programmes in which the student paid separate tuition fees at each participating institution (31%) than European respondents (16%). However, in terms of programme management, different fees may cause uneven enrolment numbers, causing difficulties for future financing of the programme.

Institutions can collect tuition fees in different ways. One way is that fees are paid to the coordinating institution, which then divides tuition revenues among partner institutions. However, this is not legally allowed in all countries. Some institutions apply different approaches, depending on the academic level: at postgraduate level, students pay at each institution, whereas at the undergraduate level, students only pay the home institution.

When implementing a joint programme, the following tuition fee-related issues must be borne in mind:

- If charging tuition fees, European partner institutions should discuss whether all students should pay the same amount or whether to differentiate between European and non-European students;
- Independent approval of the University Board may be required for charging separate tuition fees;
- It is essential to check the legal situation of potential partners before implementing a joint programme. Involving administrative and/or legal offices can be helpful at this stage.

An essential tool for information on different higher education funding schemes and tuition fee policies is the Eurydice website, where tuition fee and financial support policies in European countries are regularly updated.

## Scholarships

The JOIMAN report indicates that 90% of the 89 surveyed institutions offer some form of scholarship to (some or all of their) students. This scholarship funding mostly consists of a combination of EU and public or other sources. In Erasmus Mundus master courses at the surveyed institutions, scholarships generally cover tuition waivers, whereas in non-Erasmus Mundus master courses, scholarships are usually meant to partially cover travel, housing and living costs. 30% of the surveyed institutions distribute scholarships on a performance-based system, followed by programmes using a mix of performance, needs and other considerations.

The form of scholarship partially depends on the particular national funding model. An IIE survey among 92 institutions in the EU and 81 in the US indicates, for instance, that EU respondents were more likely than US institutions to offer financial assistance from either tuition fee waivers or mobility scholarships.

## 6.4. Marketing

### Key messages for practitioners

1. Develop a joint strategy with partner(s), involving all levels within the institution and the marketing departments.

2. Use a tailored approach to different audiences. Use alumni and partner networks as primary channels. Do market research, make an inventory of appropriate bachelor programmes, target academics. Do not forget national marketing.

3. Be transparent about employability options in all communications (e.g. indicating whether there are particular restraints in terms of regulated professions due to the joint, international curricula).

> 4. Be transparent about employability options in all communications (e.g. indicating whether there are particular restraints in terms of regulated professions due to the joint, international curricula).
>
> 5. Emphasise the programme's competitiveness.
>
> 6. Your selling point is the added value of this joint programme versus national programmes. Stress the complementarity of partner HEIs, the jointly developed curriculum, interdisciplinary, the integrated programme. Communicate the added value of 'soft skills'.
>
> 7. Implement a quality assurance cycle to all marketing activities (to evaluate and improve).

It is useful to develop a marketing plan involving all relevant institutional stakeholders: the management level, the marketing and communications department, and the programme level. The content of this plan will depend on the institutional strategies and target groups of the joint programme.

Marketing plans for joint programmes should clarify the added value of the joint programme to potential applicants. It is useful for institutions to emphasise information on the learning outcomes of the programme, and the level of employability that can be expected to strengthen students' position on the job market after completion of the programme. Emphasising the latter will also be an advantage in highlighting any collaboration with the business community and public bodies in connection with recruitment.

For more information, the EMAP project website includes a slide presentation and short film on the visibility and promotion of Erasmus Mundus joint master and doctoral programmes.

Another tool worth examining in this context is the Erasmus Mundus Quality Assurance (EMQA) website. It provides a practical tool to develop a comprehensive course vision, unique selling positions, tips on recruiting excellent students, engaging alumni and setting up a marketing strategy. The tool is freely available and can be used for self-assessment by any practitioner involved in the development or implementation of a joint programme.

The EM-ACE project offers a tool kit to promote Erasmus Mundus opportunities among European students.

The TUBEMATES project encouraged Erasmus Mundus alumni to develop video trailers on their study abroad experiences and can provide ideas and tips.

## 6.5. Joint student administration procedures

Additional structures will be necessary to handle the student administration of joint programmes. Before the implementation of the programme, administrative procedures must be in place. And partner must agree on how to communicate with each other and with which tools. Online tools, such as Moodle, dokuWiki, Skype, and videoconference Adobe Connect Pro (ACP), can be helpful to support the joint administration and communication.

## Joint student recruitment and application process

A shared web portal for a joint student recruitment process is a student recruitment tool. Such a portal should offer all relevant information on the programme, including learning outcomes, employability prospects, partner expertise, mobility options, target group, admission criteria, application process and selection criteria. The aim is to centralise and unify admissions information and encourage applications by promoting transparency and consistency in the information provided. The JOIMAN report sketches a time-line of administrative processes relating to student recruitment and registration and gives an overview of issues that can lead to conflicts in the administration of joint programmes (pp.54-60).

The Erasmus Mundus Quality Assurance (EMQA) tool provides a checklist of actions and good practice for efficient student recruitment.

The JOIMAN report is one of the few sources on the practicalities of the application process. The report suggests:

- that online application procedures are essential to attract international students;
- that verification of documents should be done only by the first institution, with other destination institutions relying on this screening;
- to involve registrar or admission offices to ensure that all selected students meet the formal general registration requirements.

Whether the student application process is centralised or decentralised (i.e. each partner organises its own procedure), it is important that all partners are informed of, or have access to, the application information (according to ECA's joint programme checklist).

The JOI.CON project has developed an sample application form for a joint European master (and doctoral) degree.

## Student selection and registration

Student selection acts as a gatekeeper to the joint programme and requires the involvement of all partner institutions. Thus, it is essential that all responsibilities for (and in) the selection procedure are clearly assigned.

The two most important recommendations in the student selection process for institutions offering a joint programme are (1) to adopt a common selection procedure and (2) to set up a joint selection committee with harmonised selection procedures. Partners usually perform the pre-selection, with the final decision referred to a joint selection committee.

Concerning student registration, the idea is that, in a joint programme, all partner institutions are responsible for the students and the entire study programme, and all students are degree students at the institutions they attend during the programme. Different approaches to registration are possible, but must comply with national laws and institutional guidelines on awarding a degree.

Other guidelines on admission procedures are the following:

- when formulating joint admission criteria, the partner institutions must be aware that some institutions may have stricter laws and less flexibility, and that it may be necessary to obtain special permissions or exemptions from their University Board to meet the requirements of participating institutions;
- institutions must clarify which admission document requirements of all partner institutions of the consortium they need;

- the partner institutions must agree not only on admission procedures, but also on application deadlines and appeal procedures.

See the JOIMAN report for an overview of the most common selection criteria and of different approaches between Erasmus Mundus and non-Erasmus Mundus joint programmes (pp.58-59).

The EMAP project (Erasmus Mundus Active Participation) offers several recorded videos of coordinator presentations on partnership and student selection.

## Information to students

All relevant information must be clearly presented to students and be easily accessible before and upon arrival. Literature sources suggest the following guidelines:

1. Partners must agree on who is responsible for answering questions from potential applicants. There should be only one focal information point (usually the coordinator).
2. Appropriate information in English and the home language(s) of the partner institution(s) to potential students must be offered and kept up-to-date on relevant websites and recruitment portals.
3. Comparable information should be offered to students from all participating institutions.
4. The information offered should include details on admission criteria and procedures, entry points, credit weighting and workloads (incl. information on the ECTS system for non-European students), learning outcomes, employability, mobility requirements (e.g. how accommodation issues are addressed), the qualification/degree that will be awarded, course structure and coordination, and accessibility of the programme for economically disadvantaged and physically disabled students.
5. Students are subject to the academic policies of the institution where they are in residence. When students move back and forth, this rule should be clearly stated.

## Monitoring student progress

Participating institutions must agree on who is responsible for the monitoring of students, procedures regarding lack of study progress, and rules for leaves of absence. Participating institutions must be informed about the different institutional procedures, so that they can all recognise the procedures at the respective institutions. If possible, strategies, procedures and guidelines should be jointly formulated in order to ensure the best monitoring.

The JOIMAN report observes that in the 36 institutions surveyed, in most cases, monitoring of academic progress is performed by the institution that delivers the course programme. In most cases surveyed, students on joint programmes are assigned a local coordinator who is responsible for monitoring their academic progress. Further, all academic staff, teaching in the programme, are responsible for monitoring courses and examinations. Local coordinators generally report their observations to joint programme boards or quality assurance boards.

## Student agreement templates

A joint programme consortium normally defines the obligations of the student and the consortium in a 'student agreement', which is signed by the student and the consortium at the start of the programme. Examples of student agreements are available in the Annex to the JOI.CON report, and through the EACEA Erasmus Mundus Action 1 good practice website.

## Assessment and grading

Participating institutions must have a clear and shared policy on assessment and grade calculation. This policy must state whether the completion requirement framework is based on e.g. the number of completed course credits, the student workload, or required learning outcomes. It is recommended to develop a grade conversion table. You can find a template for such a table on the EACEA Erasmus Mundus Action 1 good practice website.

One example of a grade conversion table is the table used by the Erasmus Mundus Master in Security and Mobile Computing (NordSecMob), a joint programme offered by five universities in northern Europe. Figure 3 illustrates the NordSecMob grade conversion model and table. Please note that this is an example of a grade conversion model that works for this specific master programme; since grading systems vary between universities, each joint programme consortium needs to develop its own grade conversion model.

**Figure 3: Example of a grade conversion model in a joint master programme offered by five universities**

University 1 uses a credit system equal to ECTS credits. The grading scale is from 1 to 5. It also uses Pass/Fail grades.

University 2 uses higher education credits where 1 higher education credit equals 1 ECTS credit. The grading scale is: A-Excellent, B-Very Good, C-Good, D-Satisfactory, E-Sufficient, F-Fail.

University 3 uses a letter-based credit system in correspondence with ECTS. Grades are on a scale from A-F (A is best, F is Fail). The university also uses the scale Passed/Not Passed.

University 4 uses a 7-grade scale, which is entirely comparable with the ECTS point scale. The university also uses the scale Passed/Not passed.

University 5 uses an ECTS credit system and a letter-based grading system on a scale from A-F. The university also uses a Pass/Fail grades.

The following grade conversion table is used when transferring the credits:

| ECTS | University 1 | University 2 | University 3 | University 4 | University 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **A, best 10%** | 5 | A | A, 90-100 | 12 | A-excellent |
| **B, next 25%** | 4 | B | B, 80-89 | 10 | B-very good |
| **C, next 30%** | 3 | C | C, 60-79 | 7 | C-good |
| **D, next 25%** | 2 | D | D, 50-59 | 4 | D-satisfactory |
| **E, next 10%** | 1 | E | E, 40-49 | 02 | E-sufficient |
| **F, fail** | 0, failed | F | F, 0-39 | 00, -3 | F-insufficient |

Taken from: NordSecMob Student Handbook, version 21-06-2012. Note: the NordSecMob programme is offered by five universities (the Aalto University School of Sciences, Finland; KTH Royal Institute of Technology, Sweden; the Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Norway; the Technical University of Denmark, Denmark; and the University of Tartu, Estonia).

To provide clarity for students, participating institutions are recommended to clearly indicate their grade conversion model in the student handbook for the joint programme. The student handbook must also clearly state whether the participating universities will take care of the transferring of credits between the universities. The NordSecMob Student Handbook, for instance, clearly indicates that the participating universities will transfer credits between the universities. The student handbook can also indicate where – at each participating institution – students can order credit transcripts.

The EACEA Synthesis Report 2013 states that best results were achieved when academic staff met regularly at programme level events to discuss course content, teaching and joint supervision methods, and evaluation practices in view of achieving greater harmonisation in grading the learning outcomes.

Having an independent external assessor to ensure compatibility of grading standards across courses and modules can be useful. Co-supervision of the master dissertation/thesis supports the common approach to assessment, as well as a joint, international jury for the dissertation/thesis defence.

The grading policy must also clearly state what constitutes a failure. Course failure may vary between institutions and this must be clearly communicated to partners and students. Sufficient opportunities to re-sit exams and re-take courses must be available, as agreed by the partners. Partner institutions must agree on the rules for dismissal in case students perform well at one partner, but not at the other. In some programmes, a dismissal by one partner means a dismissal from the entire programme. The partners should also discuss re-admission policies.

## Credit accumulation

The approach of double or triple counting the same student workload (i.e. counting the same credits at different consortium universities) can significantly jeopardise the academic integrity of the programme. An IIE survey of 92 EU and 81 U.S. institutions found that 66% of the responding institutions had measures in place to regulate the double counting of credits.

For credit accumulation in the European area, you can use the European Credit Transfer System as explained in the ECTS Users' Guide (2009), which is regularly updated.

## Student services

### *Welcoming and mobility*

At the start of their joint programmes, it is useful to send students the necessary academic, practical and social-cultural information. However, ideally, services provided for students on joint programmes are integrated in the general service provided to all students (avoiding 'special lanes'), according to the JOIMAN report.

Since many joint programmes are supported by highly competitive scholarship schemes, it is necessary to provide welcoming information individually in a smooth and timely manner. Otherwise, the selected students might opt for another study programme.

According to the 2013 EACEA Synthesis Report, mentioned as a good practice, many Erasmus Mundus courses initially welcomed all their students at the coordinating institution,

in order to address administrative issues and give an opportunity for students to understand the integration challenges during the mobility scheme.

### *Housing*

Recommended practice is to guarantee accommodation for students because most joint programmes have a fixed curriculum with an intense, preset mobility structure. The JOIMAN report observes that in the 36 institutions surveyed, housing support is normally offered as part of the general student services.

### *Student guidance*

Due to the jointly developed, fixed curricula with integrated mobility, it is recommended to ensure proper student advice and guidance during the studies, preferably at departmental level. Students could have junior academic tutors, but it is also advisable to arrange regular meetings with senior staff who monitor progress and offer support.

Career guidance is also important since students get few opportunities for local networking with employers due to the mobility scheme. According to the EACEA Synthesis Report, some Erasmus Mundus courses developed a career guidance plan, combining individual guidance with programme-level events such as career fairs involving employers or alumni events. For suggestions on how to promote employability, see section 6.8.

### *Visa and residence permits*

The JOIMAN report recommends that institutions offering joint programmes try to develop close cooperation with embassies/consulates and local authorities on visa and permit issues.

The European Commission and Executive Agency have facilitated several initiatives on this issue (see source list).

It is important to look at the visa and residence regulations at an early stage of the joint programme development and management.

### *Language support*

It is advisable to properly assess language proficiency at admission stage to ensure smooth progression. Language support and courses on academic writing and methodology can be offered.

Few data are available on language support provided specifically to students on joint programmes. It is likely that the language support they receive is part of general language support services for international students. An IIE study of joint programmes found that nearly half of the 180 researched institutions included foreign language training at both the home and the partner institution.

### **Insurance**

The consortium should consider how and through which institutions students are insured for the full length of their programme. Some national health insurance schemes fully cover visiting students.

Sometimes the partners will have to find an insurance company that can provide global insurance cover. This guide does not recommend insurance companies, since institutional experience shows that the services provided by various globally active companies differ from country to country in terms of content and quality.

## 6.6. Awarding the degree and the diploma supplement

Jointly awarding a degree and particularly issuing one diploma (and diploma supplement) remain the main challenges for joint degree programme coordinators. This is largely due to differences in national legislations. The main recommendation to keep in mind is to be fully aware of national legislation on this, and to consult the national ENIC-NARIC offices. In addition, the national ministries of education or the national university organisation may also be able to provide information to technical questions in relation to formulating and issuing the joint diploma and the Diploma Supplement. For details, refer to section 8.4.

## 6.7. Promoting employability through links to non-academic actors

Promoting employability is important: joint programme graduates need appropriate jobs, and good graduate employability rates enable the programme to increase its prestige and rely on alumni for promotion, participation in teaching or provision of internships. However, given the integrated mobility and the international nature of joint programmes, students rarely have time to form stable relationships to the local labour market and employers.

The Practical Guidelines of the Erasmus Mundus Cluster on Employability offer concrete ways of involving non-academic partners in the planning and implementation phase The guidelines are based on the results of a survey, conducted by the Employability Cluster, among approximately 3,600 Erasmus Mundus respondents (alumni and students), and on interviews with qualitative coordinators. The practical guidelines present several good practice examples and 10 key recommendations.

Integration of labour-market elements can be done through:

- an advisory board from industry and other HEIs;
- sponsors and partners;
- networking with industry and business, research institutes, professional and scientific associations;
- visiting scholars, especially non-academic guest lecturers;
- dissertation/thesis cooperation;
- non-academic partners involved in kick-off/initial intensive courses/Summer Schools;
- company, employer visits;
- practical, 'real-life' project-based learning and research projects;
- international thematic networking, social media networks;
- alumni contacts, surveys, up-to-date employability statistics;
- career development sessions by career services, personal discussions with academics, intercultural awareness;
- employer fairs on campus to create a meeting forum;
- integrated placements;
- mentoring during the placements to connect practical results to educational offer, feed-back from internship mentors.

Career orientation during the studies is important, to enable students to find appropriate employment after course completion. This can be done by asking them to find their own internships or arrange academic conferences. Confidence creates commitment.

Internships are highly appreciated in terms of employability, 84% of the Erasmus Mundus graduates assess the internship experience as highly profitable for their future career.

When planning the course structure, realise that too much mobility can hinder career orientation and settlement (Practical Guidelines of the Erasmus Mundus Cluster on Employability). Therefore, appropriate strategies need to be adopted. Given the integrated mobility and the international nature of joint programmes, students rarely have time to form stable relationships to the local labour market and employers. Additionally, programme learning outcomes are often geared towards answering global social-economic needs of an internationalised working life. Consequently, *global networking* during studies are essential for ensuring good employability perspectives, and for providing potential for future research cooperation and follow-up programmes.

Networking can be done through social media, tutoring by senior students, alumni networks and involvement of international external scholars, who can later facilitate the professional advancement of graduates. The importance of networking is described in the Practical Guidelines of the Erasmus Mundus Cluster on Employability, which also contains cases of good practice.

## 6.8.  Templates and tools

The EACEA good practice for Erasmus Mundus Joint Masters Erasmus Mundus good practice website.

EM-ACE Erasmus Mundus Action 3 project, Erasmus Mundus promotion to European students.

The Erasmus Mundus Quality Assurance (EMQA) practical tool for supporting all aspects of joint programme development and administration.

Practical approaches to the management of joint programmes: results from the JOI.CON Training Project.

## 6.9.  Sources

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Erasmus Mundus, Erasmus Mundus Programme: Cluster on Sustainability and Recognition of Degrees and Joint Degrees website. Brussels, Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency, 2013.

Erasmus Mundus, Erasmus Mundus Quality Assurance, Handbook of excellence, practical tool. Brussels, Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency, 2012.

Erasmus Mundus-ACE Erasmus Mundus Action 3 project, Erasmus Mundus promotion to European students.

Erasmus Mundus Active Participation (EMAP project, 2009-2012) website:
- A slide presentation and short film on management aspects required in the Erasmus Mundus master's programme round 2.
- A slide presentation and short film on course integration, partnership and organisation, student selection, student facilities and support – an example of an Erasmus Mundus master's programme.
- A slide presentation and short film on course management, visibility and sustainability of an Erasmus Mundus joint master's programme.

European Commission Education and Culture DG, ECTS Users' Guide. Brussels,

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JOIMAN Network, How to manage joint study programmes? Guidelines and Good Practices from the JOIMAN Network. no date.
- Book 1: Good practice report for the management and administration of joint programmes.
- Book 2: Development and management of joint programmes with non-EU partners.
- Book3: Developing and managing joint doctoral programmes: challenges and opportunities.

Obst, D., Kuder, M. and Banks, C., Joint and double degree programs in the global context: Report on an international survey, IIE, New York, 2011.

University of Bergen, Agreement template. Bergen, no date.

**Other sources**

Evers, N. and Lokhoff, J. eds, Links that matter. Recurring themes in EU-Asian Higher Education Cooperation, 2010.

Knight, J. and Lee, J., 'International Joint, Double, and Consecutive Degree Programmes: New Developments, Issues, and Challenges', in: Deardorff, D.K. et al., The SAGE Handbook of International Higher Education, Sage, California, 2012, pp.343-357.

NordSecMob Consortium, NordSecMob Student Handbook, version 21-06-2012.

Obst, D. and M. Kuder, Joint and Double Degree Programs: An Emerging Model for Transatlantic Exchange. Berlin and New York, 2009.

TUBEMATES project.

# 7. Quality assurance (QA)

This chapter focuses on the quality assurance issues that need to be taken into account when developing and managing joint programmes. It discusses the European Standards and Guidelines, the Erasmus Mundus Quality Assurance tool, and internal and external quality assurance aspects, including the use of alumni.

## 7.1. Key messages for practitioners

1. Start your cooperation by discussing what you (and your university and department) mean by 'quality' and how it can be jointly defined and measured within your joint programme.

2. Be(come) fully aware of national accreditation legislation in all the countries where parts of the joint programme are offered.

3. Look for common reference points to monitor quality. One approach is to jointly discuss quality based on the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ESG) – see section 7.2.

4. The use of alumni in monitoring the quality of joint programmes is crucial, since they are the only ones who have followed the entire mobility path with diverse learning environments.

5. If programme-level accreditation is required in the partner countries, a single accreditation is recommended. Please contact the European Consortium for Accreditation (ECA).

6. A tool to consult is ECA's Joint Programme Checklist, which is inspired by quality assurance and based on good practice in joint programmes.

## 7.2. The European Standards and Guidelines (ESG)

The European Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education was established in 2000, and transformed into the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) in 2004. The aim of ENQA is to promote European cooperation in quality assurance in higher education.

The European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) were developed as part of the Bologna Process and adopted by European ministers of higher education in 2005. There are three parts, covering:

- internal quality assurance;
- external quality assurance;
- external quality assurance agencies.

The ESG for internal quality assurance cover the following topics:

- approval, monitoring and periodic review of programmes and award;
- assessment of students;
- quality assurance of teaching staff;
- learning resources and student support;
- information systems;
- public information.

In September 2014, the revised European Standards and Guidelines were approved by the Bologna Follow-up Group (BFUG).[2]

## 7.3. Erasmus Mundus Quality Assurance practical tool

A tool worth examining is the EMQA website. It is a 'participatory approach to quality assurance'. EMQA is not a standard quality assurance process of judging or ranking courses against a fixed set of 'standards'. Instead, it assumes that international programmes are constantly innovating and that their results need to be immediately available to the higher education sector. The tool is available for free and can be used for self-assessment by any practitioner involved in the development or implementation of a joint programme.

Four guides are available online, for both master and doctoral level:

- comprehensive course vision;
- integrated learning & teaching, and staff development strategy;
- realistic management, financial, and institutional strategy;
- recruit excellent students, deliver value, engage alumni.

These are practical guides, with checklists and guidelines.

## 7.4. Internal quality assurance

As for all forms of higher education, for joint programmes it is vital to set principles for internal and external QA measures. It is advisable to base the internal QA measures for a joint programme on the existing internal QA measures. The challenges here lay in matters such as ownership of the procedures, responsibility, and cooperation with partners without breaching security.

One option is to mutually recognise the internal quality assurance schemes of the participating institutions, and include this in the agreement between the institutions. The consortium can develop additional criteria and questions that further investigate typical aspects of a joint programme, such as its organisation or its added value compared to other programmes.

The JOI.CON project indicates that emphasis on quality assurance and accreditation are gaining more and more importance. Joint programmes usually start on the basis of mutual trust, but in order to secure international recognition it is essential to develop a quality assurance policy, including administrative and academic procedures.

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[2] At the time of printing this guide, the 2015 EHEA Ministerial Meeting in Yerevan, where the revised ESG are scheduled to be adopted, has not yet taken place. Please check the final version after the EHEA meeting.

JOI.CON describes additional goals for the internal QA process, such as reviewing the curriculum, identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the courses, modules and teaching units, monitoring student progress and achievements, increasing the transparency of teaching and study activities, and improving the study and examination processes.

EUA's guidelines for quality enhancement show quality-related questions that should be addressed by all those responsible for the quality of joint programmes. Teaching is a recurring theme, especially related to the course structure and the learning context. Services are mentioned briefly as a point of interest when implementing mobility.

The EMAP project (Erasmus Mundus Active Participation) offers several recorded videos of presentations on setting up internal quality assurance systems by joint programme coordinators.

## 7.5. External quality assurance

It is advisable to find out beforehand which external quality assurance system is valid for your joint programme, and which aspects this system covers (and doesn't).

The external quality assurance processes for higher education vary from one country to another. The distinction is whether the main focus of quality assurance is on reviewing the entire institutions and their own procedures, on programme-level accreditation, or a combination of both. Information on approaches to external quality assurance within the 47 Bologna countries can be found in the Bologna Process Implementation Report 2012.

In relation to programme-level accreditation, there are also differences between national systems and the procedures of accreditation offices, making accreditation of joint programmes a challenge. Many agencies still have to get accustomed to developing accreditation procedures for joint programmes that cross the national border. To support transparent and flexible accreditation of joint programmes, the European Consortium for Accreditation (ECA) has developed a single accreditation process, as well as a mutual agreement of recognition of accreditation decisions (MULTRA) between several accreditation agencies.

At this moment, it is impossible to have a joint degree accredited by a single accreditation organisation, as no accreditation organisation has the authorisation to do so. This can complicate the accreditation process. ECA is currently investigating the possibility to establish a central coordination point.

### Monitoring alumni career paths

To ensure long-term relevance and quality of the learning outcomes achieved through the joint curricula and the mobility structure, the individual joint programmes conduct alumni surveys (some as often as every 6 months). Alumni are invited to Programme Advisory Boards, they participate in university-industry networking and career guidance events, and they act as tutors for younger students.

The Erasmus Mundus Alumni Organisation EMA implements an annual Graduate Impact Survey to monitor career perspectives and the development of skills acquired through the programme, and personal and social development. The survey might serve as guidance for setting up similar surveys in individual joint programmes.

### Alumni networks of joint programme schemes

The OCEANS Network is a network for students and alumni of specific bilateral exchange programmes between the European Union on the one side and other industrialised countries

(Australia, Canada, Japan, New Zealand, South Korea and the USA) on the other side. The student exchanges aim at promoting better relations between participants, improving intercultural understanding and knowledge transfer.

The Erasmus Mundus Alumni Organisation EMA includes more than 10 regional networks (called 'chapters') in all parts of the world, as well as thematic networks.

### Thematic and geographic clustering of joint programmes

Linked to the Erasmus Mundus programmes, the EU has supported the thematic clustering of joint programme stakeholders. These thematic and geographic clusters can be used as a form of external quality assurance. The clusters disseminate the results and experiences of the Erasmus Mundus beneficiaries, coordinators, students, alumni and other relevant stakeholders. The clusters exploit the synergies between the different Erasmus Mundus Joint Programmes and Attractiveness Projects.

The clusters focus on five themes: sustainability, recognition of joint degrees, employability, a regional cluster on Asia, and a thematic cluster on climate change.

The Practical Guidelines of the Cluster on climate change contains a list of possible thematically relevant networking activities to enhance networking between various joint programmes.

## 7.6. Sources

**Key sources – Quality assurance**

Erasmus Mundus Active Participation (EMAP) project presentations on setting up internal quality assurance systems.

Erasmus Mundus Quality Assurance (EMQA), Erasmus Mundus Quality Assurance, Handbook of excellence, practical tool. Brussels, Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency, 2012.

Erasmus Mundus Quality Assurance (EMQA), Erasmus Mundus Quality Assessment 2012, Handbook of Excellence Doctoral Programmes. Brussels, Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency, 2012.

Erasmus Mundus Quality Assurance (EMQA), has four practical guides:
- Comprehensive course vision
- Integrated learning & teaching, and staff development strategy
- Realistic management, financial, and institutional strategy
- Recruit excellent students, deliver value, engage alumni

Erasmus Mundus students and alumni Association

European Area of Recognition

European Area of Recognition, EAR Manual

European Association for Quality Assurance (ENQA), Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area. ENQA, 2009.

European Association for Quality Assurance (ENQA), proposal for the revised ESG, 2014.

European Consortium for Accreditation (ECA), Joint programme checklist, 2014.

European Consortium for Accreditation (ECA), Multilateral Agreement on the Mutual Recognition of Accreditation Results regarding Joint Programmes (MULTRA), 2013.

European Higher Education Area (EHEA) Ministerial Conference 2012, Bucharest Communiqué.

European University Association, Guidelines for Quality Enhancement in European Joint Master Programmes. Brussels, EUA, 2006.

Eurydice. The European Higher Education Area in 2012: The Bologna Process Implementation Report. Eurydice, 2012.

JOI.CON, Practical approaches to the management of joint programmes: results from the JOI.CON Training Project. Leipzig University, 2012.

# 8. Recognition

When joint programme students obtain their degree, their qualifications will need to be recognised in the countries where they want to pursue further studies or find employment.

## 8.1. Key messages for practitioners

1. Multidisciplinarity can cause challenges for national recognition. Therefore, consult the national ENIC-NARIC office, and if necessary, the national education ministries:
    a. when drafting the joint diploma and Diploma Supplement, and
    b. on rights to professions and access to further studies.

2. HEIs are advised to consult the Guidelines on Good Practice on awarding Joint Degrees by ECA, mentioned below.

## 8.2. The Lisbon Convention

The Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC) – in full: the Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region – came into existence in 1997, and is a convention of the Council of Europe and UNESCO. It has been ratified by 47 member states of the Council of Europe, except for Greece and Monaco. Outside of Europe, Canada and the Unites States have not ratified the LRC either. The LRC is a binding international treaty and serves as the foundation of recognition in the European region.

Several subsidiary texts have been adopted since. The most relevant ones, in the context of this publication, are the:

- Recommendations on Criteria and Procedures (2001);
- Recommendation on the Recognition of Joint Degrees (2004).

One of the fundamental principles of the LRC is that 'foreign qualifications shall be recognised unless there is a substantial difference between the foreign qualification for which recognition is sought and the corresponding qualification in the host country'. In short, substantial differences are differences considered so severe that they most likely will prevent students from succeeding in getting their qualifications recognised. The burden of proof to determine a substantial difference lies with the competent recognition authority. Transparent procedures and information provision are guaranteed to students and graduates.

## 8.3. The European Area of Recognition (EAR)

The LRC and the accompanying recommendations (see above) are legally binding for the states that ratified the treaty, but its principles leave room for interpretation. This has led to differences in recognition practices between countries, which is one of the major obstacles for fair recognition of qualifications and, hence, for student mobility in the European region.

To offer a solution, various initiatives have been launched to streamline recognition practices in the EHEA. One of the examples is the European Area of Recognition (EAR) project, which

provides a practical translation of the LRC principles to the ENIC-NARICs. The EAR manual has been recommended by the ministers of education in the Bucharest Communiqué in 2012. In 2014 a new version of the EAR manual, specifically geared towards higher education institutions, was published: the EAR HEI manual.

## 8.4. Guidelines for good practice on awarding joint degrees

The European Consortium for Accreditation (ECA) has developed Guidelines for Good Practice for awarding Joint Degrees. The main aim of these guidelines is to facilitate and improve the full recognition of joint degrees. The guidelines describe the information ENIC-NARICs indicated they need to evaluate a degree resulting from a joint programme.

*The Consortium*

The following guidelines specify the 'requirements' the consortium needs to fulfil.

ECA Guidelines for Good Practice:

- all institutions in the consortium are recognised and/or accredited as higher education institutions in their (sub)national higher education systems;
- all higher education institutions in the consortium fully recognise the joint programme as a programme offered by their institution;
- each higher education institution in the consortium is entitled to legally offer this type of programme (level, orientation, discipline) as a joint programme, even if that institution is not involved in the awarding of the joint degree (that this programme may lead to).

*The Joint Programme*

The guidelines below specify the 'requirements' for the joint programme.

ECA Guidelines for Good Practice:

- the joint programme is offered in accordance with the legal frameworks of the relevant (sub)national higher education systems;
- the joint programme is quality assured and/or accredited as a joint programme.

*The Joint Degree*

In case a joint programme leads to a joint degree, the ECA guidelines recommend, among other things, that:

- the degree is awarded within the legal framework and the relevant higher education systems;
- the diploma refers to all relevant (sub)national legal frameworks;
- HEI references and signatures must be limited to the degree-awarding institutions;
- the diploma includes the full name of the degree as recognised within all legal frameworks.

*The Diploma Supplement*

There are detailed guidelines listing particular information to include in the Diploma Supplement (DS) of a joint programme, indicating the exact section of the DS. In cases the Diploma Supplement is not issued (for example for countries outside the EHEA), it is recommended to provide this information in a similar document to be issued alongside the degree.

### EMQA

The [Erasmus Mundus Quality Assurance](#) (EMQA) also provides examples in relation to Degrees and Degree Recognition, under 'Comprehensive Course Vision', point 7.

The partner institutions must agree on the procedure, design and content of the diploma. The procedure to deliver the joint diploma must be described in the cooperation agreement. Below are the guidelines for the diploma and the Diploma Supplement:

- Partners must clarify whether the individual universities require students to stay at the institution in order for the name of the institution to be listed on the joint diploma.
- Regardless of the type of diploma that is issued, the diploma and the Diploma Supplement must state that the degree is a joint degree.
- If each collaborating institution chooses to issue a separate diploma, these diplomas should mention that they have been issued for the same joint degree and are only valid if presented together.

## 8.5.  Sources

**Key sources**

Aerden, A. and J. Lokhoff, [Framework for fair recognition of joint degrees](#), ECA, 2013.
[ENIC-NARIC network](#), Information on academic and professional recognition.

Erasmus Mundus, [Erasmus Mundus Programme: Cluster on Sustainability and Recognition of Degrees and Joint Degrees website](#). Brussels, Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency.

[European Area of Recognition](#)

European Area of Recognition, [EAR Manual](#)

European Consortium for Accreditation (ECA), [Guidelines for Good Practice for Awarding Joint Degrees](#), 2014.

Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee, [Recommendations on Criteria and Procedures](#), 2001.

Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee, [Recommendation on the Recognition of Joint Degrees](#), 2004.

**Other sources**

[European Area of Recognition (EAR) project](#)

# 9. Joint doctoral programmes

This chapter deals with aspects that need to be taken into account when developing and managing joint doctoral programmes. The joint doctoral programmes are presented in a separate chapter to highlight the differences with joint bachelor and master programmes. These main differences lie in the often more unstructured format of the doctorate, the complex nature of research, development and supervision.

## 9.1. Key messages for practitioners

1.  Get to know your consortium partners and their national regulations well, before you start developing the joint doctoral programme.

2.  Jointly develop a comprehensive course vision and strategy for the joint doctoral programme.

3.  Develop balanced supervision processes across the consortium, and formal monitoring procedures to monitor candidates' research progress.

4.  A personal cotutelle agreement is required, regulating each partner's responsibilities with regard to joint supervision, evaluation and doctoral thesis defence. A joint doctoral programme must include joint supervision, but it can also entail collaboration on joint research training.

5.  Create a research and communication platform where doctoral candidates and staff can collaborate throughout the consortium.

6.  Provide doctoral candidates with relevant training and research tools and facilities.

7.  Where legally allowed, arrange employment contracts for the candidates.

8.  Set up a consortium agreement regarding intellectual property and spin-off activities.

9.  Appoint an ombudsman as a go-between between management and doctoral candidates, and a committee to deal with ethical questions.

10. The Euraxess website offers information for doctoral candidates and higher education administrators.

## 9.2. Character and added value

Doctoral programmes are intensely research focused, and therefore have different characteristics compared to master programmes. For instance, there is a closer relationship between doctoral candidates and academic staff. Doctoral programmes are more focused on

research creation and the advancement of new thinking, and are at the edge of the relationship between higher education and the 'knowledge triangle'.

As compared to the reasons stated for joint bachelor and master programmes (see section 5.2), joint doctoral programmes have three additional elements of added value:

- they are seen as giving a stable structure to longstanding research collaborations between institutions in different countries (taking the cotutelle experience a step further);

- they offer international students more attractive opportunities and, usually, access to more funds;

- joint doctoral programmes contribute to institutional research development and may contribute to improving  research quality.


## 9.3.  Development

The need for a comprehensive course vision on joint doctorate programmes is described in the Erasmus Mundus Quality Assurance EMQA handbook. It offers a  seven point overview:

- identify the unique selling proposition of running a joint programme, including the type of consortium and the academic content;
- further develop the description of the rationale and the mobility paths;
- work on a sustainability strategy;
- develop a common vision on shared cultures, both academic and administrative;
- work on a thorough employability strategy for candidates;
- agree on the examination process, taking into consideration transparency;
- agree on the degree awarded and maximise its recognition.

JOIMAN gives good recommendations on aspects relating to doctoral programme partners (pp.171-173).

The JOI.CON guide stresses the importance of knowing beforehand both the partners and the regulations of the countries involved. The JOI.CON Annex includes Comparison Tables to help institutions explore all potential obstacles to joint doctoral programmes beforehand (pp.81-139).

The Erasmus Mundus Quality Assurance (EMQA) website provides a checklist of actions and good practice in relation to integrated learning outcomes, programme pedagogy, balancing learning and teaching, as well as assessment mechanisms.

The Erasmus Mundus Quality Assurance (EMQA) website also provides a checklist of actions and good practice on how the mobility pathways can be developed to match intended learning outcomes.

The EMQA project has developed ways to provide an integrated academic strategy, including staff development, training and research components. The EMQA Handbook of Excellence provides a comprehensive overview of issues a consortium should address:

- develop balanced supervision processes across the consortium;
- make sure to have a research and communication platform where students and staff can collaborate throughout the consortium;
- look after the assessment mechanisms for the work of candidates, and make sure that they are coherent and balanced throughout the consortium;

- provide candidates with training, research tools and facilities;
- set up a formal procedure to monitor the candidates' research progress;
- pay attention to effective cultural awareness in the course and research trajectory, and the consortium – and make sure staff mobility effectively contributes to that.

The Erasmus Mundus Quality Assurance (EMQA) website offers four guides on the following issues in developing and managing joint doctoral programmes:

- Comprehensive course vision,
- Integrated learning & teaching, and staff development strategy,
- Realistic management, financial, and institutional strategy,
- Recruit excellent students, deliver value, engage alumni.

## 9.4. Management

In the case of joint doctorates, the JOIMAN report notes that a clear organisational and managerial structure is key for success and that the management structure of Erasmus Mundus Joint Doctorates differs from non-Erasmus Mundus-funded programmes.

An example of the organisational structure and partner responsibilities of a joint Erasmus Mundus doctoral programme with four institutions, is given on the Erasmus Mundus Active Participation EMAP project website. The website also includes a slide presentation and short film on the course management, visibility and sustainability of Erasmus Mundus joint doctorates.

The EMQA Handbook of Excellence – Doctoral Programmes gives a comprehensive overview of seven practical activities to be undertaken in the development and management of joint doctoral programmes. The guide gives the following guidelines:

- define which administrative bodies are responsible for the candidates;
- plan the finances taking into account contingencies;
- set up a consortium agreement regarding intellectual property and spin-off activities;
- arrange employment contracts for the candidates;
- set up and implement a quality assurance system for the programme;
- develop a consistent internationalisation strategy;
- develop and implement a marketing strategy.

The EMQA project presents valuable information on setting up realistic financial strategies, with good practice and examples at doctoral (and masters) level.

With regard to managing joint doctoral programmes, the JOIMAN report suggests that it is good practice to appoint an 'ombudsman' as go-between between management and doctoral candidates. A committee to deal with ethical questions is also useful.

### Student recruitment and selection

EMQA's Handbook of Excellence – Doctoral Programmes describes (in its fourth 'high level action') the need to focus on the doctoral candidates: how to recruit the best, provide value, and keep them linked to the programme once they are alumni. Not only the academic point of view must be considered, but also practical issues such as housing and visa. The Handbook suggests the following seven activities to undertake:

- recruit and select those candidates that are best equipped for the programme;

- look at the candidates' preparation, both academically and logistically;
- set up a supporting network for social, cultural and academic activities;
- share IT, library and other services between the consortium;
- get the best out of providing other learning opportunities such as language training and communication;
- prepare candidates to get the best out of their post-programme career by offering competences and skills training;
- work on establishing a good relation with alumni.

To select joint doctoral candidates, the JOIMAN report observed that in some cases, a special body was set up to select applicants, and that the selection committee was generally composed of representatives of all partner institutions. The report noted that the selection of joint doctoral candidates may consist of two processes by two separate groups of persons. The selection procedure may include a formal interview in which candidates present their research project to two professors, a language assessment and a motivation check. Some institutions do their pre-selection on the basis of CVs, draft research plans and reference letter(s). The final selection, however, is jointly done by all partner universities.

The JOI.CON training project provides an example of an application form for a joint European doctoral degree.

### Taxation

Taxation is often a difficult issue, and those involved in developing and managing joint programmes must be aware of the fact that taxation regulations are set at the national level. Euraxess offers details on taxation issues for doctoral mobility.

### Agreements

In joint doctoral programmes, a cotutelle agreement is individual. This means that a personal agreement for each PhD candidate is always required. The cotutelle contract regulates the partners' responsibilities with regard to joint supervision, evaluation and doctoral thesis defence. Additional institutional, national or framework agreements can still be formulated, referring to general procedures and systems. Quality assurance, admission, assessment and diplomas are aspects such agreements could cover. A joint doctoral programme must contain joint supervision, but it can also entail collaboration on joint research training.

The French-Dutch Academy has also dedicated some seminars to the theme of joint PhD and the cotutelle. The information on its website is only available in French and Dutch.

## 9.5. Templates

Examples of agreement templates are:

- the Coimbra Group template for a joint doctoral supervision agreement;
- the JOI.CON example of a doctoral candidate agreement.

The JOI.CON training project also offers:

- an example of a joint doctorate degree and of a Diploma Supplement of a joint doctorate;

- an example of an application form for a joint European master and doctoral degree.

## 9.6. Sources

**Key sources**

Erasmus Mundus Active Participation (EMAP) project website, including slide presentation and short film on the course management, visibility and sustainability of Erasmus Mundus joint doctorates.

Erasmus Mundus Quality Assurance (EMQA) website.

Erasmus Mundus Quality Assurance (EMQA), Erasmus Mundus Quality Assessment 2012, Handbook of Excellence Doctoral Programmes. Brussels, Education, Audiovisual and Culture
Executive Agency, 2012.

Erasmus Mundus Quality Assurance (EMQA) has practical guides on:
- Comprehensive course vision
- Integrated learning & teaching, and staff development strategy
- Realistic management, financial, and institutional strategy
- Recruit excellent students, deliver value, engage alumni

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JOI.CON, Practical approaches to the management of joint programmes: results from the JOI.CON Training Project, Leipzig University, 2012.

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Ekman JØrgensen, T., CODOC – Cooperation on doctoral education between Africa, Asia, Latin America and Europe, Brussels, European University Association, 2012.

The French-Dutch Academy

# 10. List of templates and examples

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| JOICON Joint Masters Comparison Table (to compare processes between partners) | JOI.CON, Practical approaches to the management of joint programmes: results from the JOI.CON Training Project, Leipzig University, 2012. Example in Annex, page 37. |
| Master-level Cooperation Agreement | JOI.CON, Practical approaches to the management of joint programmes: results from the JOI.CON Training Project, Leipzig University, 2012. Example in Annex, page 43. |
| | EACEA Executive Agency, Brussels, http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus_mundus/tools/good_practices_en.php |
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*N.B. the mentioned documents have not been legally approved*

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