

European Approach for Accreditation of Joint Degrees

Draft September 2013

Executive Summary

Due to the different legislation and heterogeneity of external quality assurance systems within the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) the complexities involved in the accreditation of joint degrees have been one major obstacle for their development.

Over the past years, quality assurance agencies in the EHEA have been working together to develop and test different approaches to simplify the accreditation of joint degrees, including joint accreditation procedures and single accreditation procedures. However, a number of existing specific – and sometimes contradictory – national requirements inhibit the possibility of conducting single accreditation procedures for joint degrees offered in several countries.

Moreover, despite the commitments of the Bucharest Communiqué, the full recognition of an accreditation decision resulting from a single procedure in the different countries involved is often a cumbersome and bureaucratic process, which frequently makes the conduct of several fragmented procedures – neglecting the joint character of the degree – the more practical solution.

In order to dismantle an important obstacle to the development of joint programmes, the expert group proposes to establish an agreed European Approach for the Accreditation of Joint Degrees, based on the ESG¹ and QF-EHEA. The group recommends that ministers make appropriate commitments to facilitate the recognition of accreditation decisions and, thus, to promote single accreditation procedures based on the European Approach.

The expert group proposes that the BFUG recommend that ministers:

- adopt the European Accreditation Approach for Joint Degrees (described in part 4 of this document); and
- commit to fully recognise accreditation decisions of EQAR-registered agencies that were made in line with the European Approach.

1. Mandate

In the Bucharest Communiqué (April 2012), ministers agreed on the following:

„We will allow EQAR-registered agencies to perform their activities across the EHEA, while complying with national requirements. In particular, we will aim to recognise quality assurance decisions of EQAR-registered agencies on joint and double degree programmes.
(...)

¹ Before adoption the *European Approach for Accreditation of Joint Degrees* will need to be revised in order to take account of the revised ESG. This is likely to be only a question of wording.

We encourage higher education institutions to further develop joint programmes and degrees as part of a wider EHEA approach. We will examine national rules and practices relating to joint programmes and degrees as a way to dismantle obstacles to cooperation and mobility embedded in national contexts.”

The Bologna Follow-Up Group (BFUG) consequently included in its work programme 2013-2017 the task to:

“Develop a policy proposal for a specific European accreditation approach for Joint programmes, which should be applied to all those Joint programmes that are subject to compulsory programme accreditation at national level.”

The BFUG commissioned a small expert group to draft such a policy proposal, and to report back to the BFUG Working Groups on “Structural Reforms” and “Mobility and Internationalisation”.

The expert group was composed of:

- Mark Frederiks (Structural Reforms WG, The Netherlands)
- Achim Hopbach (Structural Reforms WG, ENQA)
- Andrejs Rauhvargers (Reporting WG, Latvia)
- Colin Tück (Structural Reforms WG, EQAR)

The present recommendation was prepared by the expert group and revised after discussion by the BFUG Working Groups on “Structural Reforms” (at its meeting of ***) and “Mobility and Internationalisation” (at its meeting of ***)).

2) Introduction

Joint programmes are set up to enhance the mobility of students and staff, to facilitate mutual learning and cooperation opportunities and to create programmes of excellence. Joint degrees express the jointness also in the awarding of the degree.

While in the EHEA the political will to increase the number of joint programmes and joint degrees is evident through various Ministerial Communiqués, the implementation of these initiatives is still hampered by serious problems.

A significant amount of these problems concentrate around issues of recognition and quality assurance (QA). These problems are mainly rooted in the different national legislations in the EHEA and the existing heterogeneity of QA systems in the countries concerned.² In the case of joint degrees there are still countries whose legislation does not allow awarding joint degrees at all.

A number of projects have been initiated to investigate and tackle problems with setting up, quality assuring and recognising joint programmes. An overview of current projects can be found in Annex 6 of the BRIDGE Handbook³. Important steps forward regarding the recognition of joint degrees have been made through the development of the European Area of Recognition (EAR) Manual⁴, and a report by ENIC-NARICs on fair recognition of joint degrees as an outcome of the ECA project "Joint programmes: Quality Assurance and Recognition of degrees awarded" (JOQAR)⁵.

Definitions

There is often confusion in the use of terminology regarding joint programmes and degrees. To make it clear from the outset what types of programmes are addressed by this recommendation a definition of the term 'joint degree' and of related terms is provided. These definitions are in line with Bologna policy documents and are being used, for instance, by the ENIC-NARICs⁶.

Joint programme:

An integrated curriculum coordinated and offered jointly by different higher education institutions and leading to double/multiple degrees or a joint degree.

Joint degree:

A single document awarded by higher education institutions offering the joint programme and nationally acknowledged as the recognised award of the joint programme.

Multiple degree:

Separate degrees awarded by higher education institutions offering the joint programme attesting the successful completion of this programme. (If two degrees are awarded by two institutions, this is a 'double degree').

² ENQA (2012), Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes (ENQA workshop report 19)

³ Luca Lantero (ed.) (2012), BRIDGE Handbook. Joint programmes and recognition of joint degrees.

⁴ <http://www.eurorecognition.eu/>

⁵ Axel Aerden & Jenneke Lokhoff (2013), Framework for Fair Recognition of Joint Degrees, ECA Occasional Paper, The Hague. For a description and outcomes of the JOQAR project see: <http://www.eacaconsortium.net/main/projects/joqar>

⁶ Axel Aerden & Hanna Reczulska (2012), Guidelines for Good Practice for Awarding Joint Degrees. ECA Occasional Paper, The Hague, p. 33-40: 2013.

Hence, the common characteristic of joint programmes is that they are offered jointly whilst the degree awarding can be different (double/multiple or joint). Joint degrees are therefore a specific subset of joint programmes, as it applies only to those joint programmes that lead to the award of a joint degree. These distinctions are important because the consequences for the accreditation and/or approval of the various types of joint programmes differ significantly.

Numbers

In 2009 the number of joint programmes was estimated by Rauhvargers et al (2009) to be around 2,500 in the EHEA⁷. As a consequence the actual number may now be above 3,000. In a survey results report by Obst et al (2011)⁸ it was found that 84% of responding higher education institutions offered joint programmes. Thirty three per cent of the responding higher education institutions were involved in awarding joint degrees.

Many more joint programmes could, however, be provided as joint degrees if national legislation, accreditation and recognition practices would become more suitable for awarding joint degrees. This recommendation aims to serve as one step in dismantling these existing obstacles.

3) Current Practices of Accreditation of Joint Degrees

Already in the early days of joint programmes, it became clear that in particular joint degrees challenge the existing national quality assurance systems: more than one provider develop and offer a joint programme which is studied at more than one institution in more than one country with different political and legal frameworks and not least with differing quality assurance regimes. The European quality assurance agencies accepted this challenge and made a great effort in the last years to analyse the specific issues of quality assurance in joint programmes. When accrediting joint degrees several approaches to these procedures have been established in the past years: national, joint or single procedures. Accreditation of joint degrees (i.e. accreditation of those joint programmes that lead to the award of a joint degree) is not necessarily different from the accreditation of joint programmes. As a consequence, the distinction between national, joint and single accreditation procedures as discussed in this section is similar for both joint programmes and joint degrees.

Several National accreditation procedures

Several national agencies from the countries of the higher education institutions involved accredit a joint degree in separate procedures. Traditionally, each agency reviews only the part of the provision offered by the higher education institution(s) in the country that falls under the agency's remit. As a consequence, the assessment of the provision is fragmented (between different agencies and countries), which neglects the crucial characteristic of the programme, namely that it is offered jointly. Furthermore, several agencies and experts review parts of the programme, but the programme as a whole is not evaluated externally. From a viewpoint of quality (and of the students enrolled) the accreditation of a joint degree should cover the totality of the programme that leads to awarding the joint degree.

⁷ Andrejs Rauhvargers, Cynthia Deane & Wilfried Pauwels (2009), *Bologna Process Stocktaking Report. Report from working groups appointed by the Bologna Follow-up Group to the Ministerial Conference in Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve.*

⁸ Daniel Obst, Matthias Kuder & Clare Banks (2011), *Joint and Double Degree Programs in the Global Context*, Institute of International Education.

Joint accreditation procedure

In a joint accreditation procedure several agencies work together and agree on a common assessment framework, e.g. by taking one agency's framework and adding additional elements of the other agency/-ies, or by agreeing on a new framework which takes the requirements of all agencies into account.

They can jointly install a panel of experts who will commence a site visit at one location (although in practice visits at two or more locations also occur) resulting in one panel report (although sometimes reporting requirements are so different that two reports are written).

Whilst joint procedures have the advantages that they look at the totality of the programme and avoid duplication in national procedures, there are also some setbacks. Experience shows that, especially when agencies cooperate for the first time, comparing frameworks and agreeing on the specifics of the procedure mean quite an investment in time for agencies, experts and the institutions involved. Nearly for every programme a new process needs to be established on an ad-hoc basis, depending on the institutions and countries involved, as there is no standard process. If several locations are visited or multiple reports written, the reduction of costs and efforts is limited.

In addition, problems in the decision-making phase may loom if the agencies attach different conclusions to the results of the joint procedure. It is possible that the cooperating agencies take different accreditation decisions which may be detrimental for both the institutions and the future cooperation between the agencies.

Single accreditation procedure

In a single accreditation procedure there is only one agency and one assessment framework for carrying out the procedure. The framework consists of two building blocks: the European shared component (the "core") and the relevant national components (the "plus").

The European shared component covers the essential standards and criteria that need to be taken into account in all single accreditation procedures, and is based on the ESG and the QF-EHEA. The national components cover additional, particular national requirements. These national components include the elements of the assessment criteria and/or the assessment procedure that need to be included in an accreditation procedure in a specific national higher education system. One panel is deployed for the assessment of the entire programme and this panel will usually only visit one location of the joint degree.

Nevertheless, the aim is that the results of a single procedure are accepted by all countries where the joint degree is provided. Therefore, the panel writes one report which should be the basis for the accreditation decisions of the other agencies.

Lessons Learnt

Today one can rely on ample experience with quality assurance of joint programmes in general and accreditation of joint degrees in particular. Two main lessons learnt are as follows:

In principle, part II of the ESG is applicable to accreditation of joint degrees. Experience clearly shows that the conduct of QA of joint programmes and joint degrees in itself does not constitute the problem many HEIs are facing in the accreditation of joint degrees. ESG are applied widely in the EHEA and national specificities in the conduct of accreditation procedures are within acceptable boundaries.

What remains the major impediment for both cooperating institutions and agencies are rather the national regulations for approval of the different joint degrees and, thus, the additional national criteria that need to be applied. This is the clear outcome of the above mentioned JOQAR, the most profound project on accreditation of joint degrees.

Remaining Obstacles

Various evaluations of accreditations of joint degrees led to a positive conclusion on the use of shared European standards and criteria (based on ESG and QF-EHEA).

With regard to the additional national criteria it was concluded that these should be removed when assessing joint programmes in single accreditation procedures. Agencies and experts agreed that these additional national criteria were not suitable for assessing joint programmes and are merely hindering the development of such programmes.⁹

The following examples can be given of such additional, national requirements that currently constitute obstacles in common assessment procedures for joint degrees. The list is based on the JOQAR project, which covered 9 countries from the EHEA: Belgium (Flanders), Czech Republic, France, Germany, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland and Portugal.

- National QA agencies which are not allowed to coordinate an international procedure or undertake a site visit abroad (although the coordinating institution that provides the joint degree is located in another country)
- Substantial changes that have occurred since the last accreditation (curriculum, subjects, staff, etc.), must be stated and described in the reaccreditation application (Czech Republic)
- The assessment report (expert report) has to be translated in the national language (Lithuania)
- A specific assessment scale is necessary:
 - This translated document needs to follow the six areas included in the Lithuanian framework and each of these six areas shall be assessed on a four-point scale (Lithuania)
 - The assessment panel needs to come to a general conclusion regarding the joint programme. This general conclusion is either unsatisfactory, satisfactory, good or excellent and needs to be weighted and substantiated (The Netherlands)
- Specific requirements regarding handicapped students and equal opportunity (Germany)
- Formal requirements regarding ECTS:
 - A Master's qualification requires 300 ECTS credits including the preceding programmes for the first qualification for entry into a profession (Germany)
 - Second cycle studies take at least 90 ECTC (Poland)

⁹ Thomas Blanc de la Carrere and Mark Frederiks (2013), "Single Accreditation of Joint Programmes: Pilots Evaluation Report", ECA, The Hague.

- The number of ECTS credits attributed to the joint master's programme must be in the range from 90 to 120 credits (Portugal)
- The Master's dissertation should range from 15 to 30 ECTS credits (Germany), the curriculum should include an original dissertation or project, worth at least 35% of the total number of credit units (e.g. 42 credits in a programme of 120 credits) (Portugal) – as can easily be seen, these requirements are contradictory.
- A module is generally concluded with one examination and should account for at least five ECTS credits (Germany)

Specific requirements regarding the curriculum (Lithuania): a semester should consist of not more than 5 subjects (with a minimum of 3 ECTS per subject). This poses a problem if a programme wants to offer e.g. 6 subjects with 5 ECTS in a semester.

- Specific requirements regarding staff:
 - The joint programme has its „guarantee“(coordinator) at the Czech partner institution. This refers to a professor or an associate professor who is a full-time employee at the institution and not more than half-time employed at some other institution and whose research and publishing activities are closely connected to the specific joint programme¹⁰ (Czech Republic)
 - The study programme is provided by the staff meeting legal requirements (Lithuania)
 - At least 50 per cent of the academic FTEs allotted to the provision (*of the part(s) that are provided by the Norwegian institution(s)*) must be members of the institution's own academic staff. Of these, professors (full or associate) must be represented among those who teach the core elements of the provision¹¹ (Norway)
 - The minimum core staff consists of at least six teachers which hold the academic title of professor or doktor habilitowany and six teachers which hold the academic degree of Ph.D (Poland)¹²
 - The majority of the academic staff must hold a PhD degree (for a joint master's programme offered with a Portuguese university) or be a PhD holder or a specialist (for a joint master's programme offered with a Portuguese polytechnic) (Portugal)
- Specific requirements regarding the achievement of learning outcomes¹³ (Flanders and the Netherlands).

¹⁰ Note: If the professor/associate professor is employed at different institutions and the total time is more than 70hrs/week, then s/he can be counted as a PhD holder, not a habilitated teacher.

¹¹ For the different cycles specific demands apply: For first cycle provision, at least 20 per cent of the relevant discipline community/-ies must have competence as professors (full or associate); For second cycle provision, at least 10 per cent of the relevant discipline community/-ies must be full professors, and an additional 40 per cent associate professors; For third cycle provision, PhD or stipend programme for artistic development work, at least 50 per cent of the relevant discipline community/-ies must be full professors, and the rest associate professors.

¹² The members of the minimum core staff have to be full-time employees of the higher education institution that offers the joint programme, and at least since the beginning of the semester. This institution has to be their primary employment. Each member of the minimum core staff has to teach at least 30 (for a professor or doktor habilitowany) or 60 hours of class during the academic year and within the programme.

Undoubtedly many more examples from other countries can be given. The list is not exhaustive and presents only examples which can easily be complemented by examples from other countries in the EHEA.

Specific national criteria are sometimes in contradiction with other national criteria, as can be clearly seen in the case of different national ECTS requirements. Moreover, such very detailed criteria – which sometimes only make sense within the national context – are very difficult to evaluate for international experts. Although a few countries allow that these specific criteria do not have to be applied if these are conflicting with criteria in other countries, this often requires a separate administrative procedure and causes uncertainty for the institutions and agencies involved. Some of the requirements significantly limit the flexibility that is deliberately granted by what has been agreed in the Bologna Process (e.g. QF-EHEA), and are thus difficult to justify, especially for joint programmes.

A second problem that remains unsolved is that accreditation decisions need to be taken in all countries where the institutions that provide the joint degree are based, and where programme accreditation is mandatory. Although a single accreditation procedure means that these decisions can be taken on the basis of one and the same assessment report, it still requires multiple national administrative procedures to apply for accreditation by the institutions involved. There is hence a risk that multiple accreditation decisions do not point in the same direction.

In some countries accreditation decisions are of a binary nature (positive or negative) whilst in other countries there are also other possibilities (e.g. conditional accreditation). This means that in one country the decision could be conditional, whilst in another country it could be either positive or negative, depending on how serious the shortcomings are perceived by that national agency.

In addition, different accreditation periods apply, e.g. in some countries the accreditation is valid for 6 years, in other countries accreditation periods may vary from 4 to 10 years. Variety in the duration of accreditation makes it more difficult to plan single accreditation procedures.

¹³ The assessment panel should select, randomly and differentiated by marks achieved, fifteen students from a list of graduates for the last two completed academic years. For each student selected, the panel examines the meaningful students' work, including the completed and signed assessment forms.

4) Proposal for a European Accreditation Approach

In order to facilitate the accreditation of joint degrees and, thus, to dismantle one major obstacle as requested in the Bucharest Communiqué, the expert group proposes in the following sections a joint European approach for accreditation of joint degrees. The approach is envisaged to enable joint degrees offered in the EHEA to be accredited by one quality assurance agency in one single procedure, whereas the resulting decision should be valid in all countries of participating HEIs.

This approach is directly applicable for accreditation of programmes that lead to a joint degree. It therefore primarily covers countries in which programme accreditation is mandatory. This is due to the fact that differing or conflicting procedures and requirements for programme accreditation are the main obstacle with regard to quality assurance of joint degrees.

HEIs from countries where programme accreditation is not required may make use of the results of programme accreditation (carried out to fulfil the requirements applicable to their partner HEIs from countries where programme accreditation is mandatory) in their internal approval and monitoring processes for programmes (according to ESG 1.2).

For joint degrees that are offered only by HEIs from countries where programme accreditation is not required the present approach may serve as a reference in setting up joint approval and monitoring processes (see ESG 1.2) between the participating HEIs.

Likewise, for joint degrees that are offered by higher education institutions from both within and outside the EHEA, the approach might either be used for the part of provision taking place within the EHEA, or as a basis for agreeing a joint ad-hoc approach together with other agencies from the non-EHEA countries involved. In general the standards and guidelines of part II of the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) are applied in the accreditation procedure of joint degrees. The criteria are based on the ESG and the QF-EHEA. They take into account the distinctive feature of a joint degree and specify the 'standard' approach accordingly. The procedure and criteria are closely based on those developed and tested within the JOQAR project.

The European approach should be able to be applied by any EQAR-registered quality assurance agency. The accreditation decision made by the agency should -dependent on the national legal framework -come in force or be recognised in all countries where the programme is offered (and that require programme accreditation). In line with the Bucharest Communiqué, EHEA governments should therefore commit to recognise accreditation decisions by EQAR-registered quality assurance agencies that have been made as a result of a procedure in line with the following proposal and on the basis of the criteria proposed below.

A. Procedure for Accreditation of Joint Degrees in the EHEA

1. Self-Evaluation Report [ESG 2.4, 3.7]

The accreditation procedure is based on a self- evaluation report (SER) jointly submitted by the cooperating institutions. The SER contains comprehensive information that demonstrates the compliance of the programme with the criteria for accreditation of joint degrees.

In addition the report contains relevant information about the respective national frameworks of the cooperating institutions and the positioning of the programme within the national higher education systems.

The SER focuses explicitly on the distinctive feature of the joint degree as a joint endeavour of higher education institutions from more than one national higher education system.

2. Review Panel [ESG 2.4, 3.7]

The agency appoints a panel of at least four members that includes a mix of expertise in the relevant subject or discipline related field(s) and in quality assurance in higher education. The panel includes members with knowledge of the HE systems from each country of the HEIs involved and the language(s) of instruction used. At least two nationalities from the consortium providing the programme should be represented in the panel. Furthermore, the panel should include at least one student.

The panel members combine their relevant subject or discipline related expertise with international expertise and experience in order to be able to take into account the distinctive features of a joint degree.

The agency ensures the impartiality of the experts and observes fairness towards the applying higher education institution. To this end, the institution has a right to object a panel member on well-grounded reasons, but not a right to veto.

The Agency briefs the experts on the review activity, their specific role, and the concrete accreditation procedure. The briefing focuses particularly on the distinctive features of a joint degree.

3. Site Visit [ESG 2.4, 3.7]

The site visit shall enable the review panel to discuss the joint degree based on the self-evaluation report and assess whether the programme complies with the criteria for Accreditation of Joint Degrees in the EHEA.

The site visit should therefore include discussions with representatives of all cooperating institutions and in particular the management of the institutions and the programme, the staff, the students, and other relevant stakeholders such as alumni and the professional field.

Although the site visit should normally be restricted to one location, the provision at all locations has to be taken into account. Communication tools like video-conferencing etc. might be used as appropriate.

4. Review Report [ESG 2.5, 3.7]

The review panel will write a report which contains relevant evidence, analysis and conclusions regarding the accreditation criteria. The report shall also contain recommendations for developing the programme further. The review panel shall make a recommendation for the accreditation decision.

The conclusions and recommendations shall particular pay attention to the distinctive features of the joint degree.

The institutions shall have the opportunity to comment on a draft version of the review report and request correction of factual errors.

5. Accreditation Decision [ESG 2.3]

The Agency takes a decision on the basis of the review report and the recommendation, considering the comments by the higher education institutions as appropriate. It declares or denies the accreditation (with or without conditions), based on the Criteria for the Accreditation of Joint Degrees in the EHEA. The accreditation decision may be supplemented by recommendations.

The Agency gives reasons for its accreditation decision. This applies in particular for accreditation decisions limited by conditions or negative decisions and for cases where the agency deviates from the review panel's conclusions.

6. Appeals [ESG 3.7]

The institutions have the right to appeal against the accreditation decision. The agency therefore has in place a formalised appeals procedure.

7. Reporting [ESG 2.5]

The agency publishes the accreditation decision and the review report on its website. In case the review process was not conducted in English at least English summary of the review report and an English version of the accreditation decision including its reasons shall be published.

8. Follow-up [ESG 2.6]

The agency agrees with the cooperating institutions a follow-up procedure to assess the fulfilment of conditions – if applicable – and/or to evaluate the follow-up actions on recommendations – if applicable.

9. Length of Accreditation/Periodicity [ESG 2.7]

Accreditation should be granted – if the decision is positive – for a period of 6 years.¹⁴ This should be clearly specified in the published decision. During the period of accreditation, the agency should be informed about changes in the consortium offering the joint degree.

B. Criteria for Accreditation of Joint Degrees in the EHEA

1. Eligibility

1.1 Recognition

The institutions that award the joint degree are legally recognised as higher education institutions and their respective national legal frameworks allow them to participate in this joint degree.

1.2 Cooperation Agreement

The terms and conditions of the joint degree are laid down in a cooperation agreement. The agreement will in particular cover the following issues:

¹⁴ A period of 6 years is widely applied in EHEA countries.

- Denomination of the degree awarded in the programme
- Coordination and responsibilities of the partners involved regarding management and financial organisation (including funding, sharing of costs and income etc.)
- Admission and selection procedures for students
- Mobility of students and teachers
- Examination regulations, student assessment methods, recognition of credits and degree awarding procedures in the consortium.

1.3 The joint degree programme is offered jointly, involving all cooperating institutions. The higher education institutions that award the joint degree are actively involved in offering the curriculum.

2. Learning Outcomes

2.1 Level

The intended learning outcomes align with the corresponding level in the Framework for Qualifications in the European Higher Education Area (FQ-EHEA).

2.2 Disciplinary field

The intended learning outcomes comprise knowledge, skills, and competencies in the respective disciplinary field(s).

2.3 Achievement

The programme can demonstrate that the intended learning outcomes are achieved.

3. Study Programme [ESG 1.2]

3.1 Curriculum

The structure and content of the curriculum are fit to enable the students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

3.2 Credits

The European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) is applied properly and the distribution of Credits is clear.

3.3 Workload

A joint bachelor programme amounts to a total student workload of not less than 180 and not more than 240 ECTS-credits; a joint master programme amounts to a total of not less than 60 and not more than 120 ECTS-credits (credit ranges according to the FQ-EHEA).

4. Admission and Recognition

4.1. Admission and selection

The admission requirements and selection procedures are appropriate in light of the programme's level and discipline.

4.2. Recognition of qualifications and of periods of studies (including recognition of prior learning) is applied in line with the Lisbon Recognition Convention and subsidiary documents.

5. Learning, Teaching and Assessment [ESG 1.3]

5.1 Learning and teaching

The pedagogical concept corresponds with the intended learning outcomes. Learning and teaching approaches applied take into account potential cultural differences of the students.

5.2 Assessment of students

The examination regulations and the assessment of the achieved learning outcomes correspond with the intended learning outcomes. They are applied consistently among partner institutions.

6. Student Support [ESG 1.5]

The student support services contribute to the achievement of the intended learning outcomes. They take into account specific challenges of mobile students.

7. Resources [ESG 1.4]

7.1 Staff

The adequate implementation of the study programme is ensured with regard to the staff (quantity, qualifications, professional and international experience).

7.2 Facilities

The facilities provided are sufficient and adequate in view of the intended learning outcomes

8. Transparency and Documentation [ESG 1.7]

Relevant information about the programme like admission requirements and procedures, course catalogue, examination and assessment procedures etc. are well documented and published by taking into account specific needs of mobile students.

9. Quality Assurance [ESG part 1]

The cooperating institutions apply joint internal quality assurance procedures in accordance with part one of the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area.

5) Proposal for the Yerevan Communiqué

The expert group proposes the following text for the Yerevan Communiqué:

We renew our commitment to dismantle obstacles to international cooperation between higher education institutions and the development of joint degrees.

We adopt the European Approach for Accreditation of Joint Degrees as a means to facilitate the external quality assurance of joint degrees that are subject to compulsory programme accreditation. We commit to recognise accreditation decisions by EQAR-registered agencies on joint degrees that were made in line with the European Approach.