# 10 Golden Rules for New Joint Masters Programmes
## (EUA Joint Masters Project 2003*)

**1      Know why you are setting up the programme:**

New programmes should think very carefully of their motivation. Is there a gap at national or European level which needs to be filled? Is a joint programme the most appropriate mechanism? What is the anticipated academic value-added?

**2      Choose your partners carefully:**

There can be many different ways of finding institutional partners, and the choice may have extremely important effects, extending beyond the initial reasons for establishing a programme. Strong communication and trust is essential to develop common learning objectives and standards. Communication is also important in ensuring that all study periods at partner institutions are fully recognised. Consider issues such as how many institutional partners would make sense for the programme, and how similar or diverse the institutions should be.

**3      Develop well-defined programme goals and student-learning outcomes with your network partners.**

For a network to be balanced, it is important that all partners are involved in developing and defining the programme goals. As well as being part of a common learning process, it is much easier to identify with a programme in which all intellectual contributions are valued - rather than simply taking part in the implementation of a ready-made concept/product. This implies the establishment of an effective joint curriculum, tailor-made for its purpose. It is important to ensure, through curriculum arrangements, that all students have the opportunity to study in at least two different countries.

**4      Make sure that all the institutions (and not just academic colleagues) fully support the goals and objectives of the programme:**

Institutional support of all partners is essential from the outset if a programme is to have a long-term future. At an absolute minimum this should require a letter of support from the Rector outlining the tangible contributions which will be made by the institution, such as commitment to staff and students in the programme and financial support. Such a letter of commitment should be renewed periodically.

**5      Ensure that sufficient academic and administrative staff resources are involved in the programme:**

The burden of work should not fall entirely upon the shoulders of a minority of dedicated staff. Involvement of a wider group of staff within an institution will help to maintain institutional commitment. Since teaching staff mobility is also fundamental to these programmes, consider the effects of staff absences upon normal curricula. Consider the consequences if a key player within the institution were to change post. Would the institutional commitment remain? If not, the staff base for sustainable development is certainly not sufficiently broad.

**6      Ensure that a sustainable funding strategy for the programme is in place:**

Such a strategy should think about resource-management issues not at the level of individual institutions but across the network as a whole. Are resources within the network sufficient? Are they equitably distributed? Is it possible to do more to support partners facing particular difficulties?

**7      Take care that information about the programme is easily accessible to students:**

Comparable information should be provided to students from all participating institutions. In addition to course information and admission criteria and procedures, requirements in terms of mobility should be specified, including how issues such as accommodation should be

addressed, and clear information should be provided about the qualification/degree that will be awarded.  Consideration should be given to accessibility for economically disadvantaged and physically disabled students.

**8      Organise and plan sufficient meetings in advance:**
Developing a joint programme takes time. Sufficient meetings should be foreseen for network partners to develop ideas together and to assess collaboratively the coherence of the study programme. Make sure that there is agreement on learning outcomes, use of ECTS (including a common value of a credit), and use of the Diploma Supplement. Where there are doubts about how to use these instruments, make sure that learning processes are in place and information is available.

**9      Develop language policy and encourage local language learning:**
The programme will need to make decisions about the language(s) of instruction, as well as about how to best exploit opportunities for students to learn languages during their programme. Questions about language should not be an afterthought of curriculum planning, but a central consideration. Linguistic preparation of mobility periods is an effective way of involving colleagues and departments within institutions, and a variety of language-learning techniques and approaches are possible.

**10     Decide who is responsible for what:**
A clear division of tasks and responsibilities will help networks to function effectively. Not all institutions need to have the same level of involvement in programmes, and diversity of contributions can allow the network partners to focus upon particular strengths. A clear division of labour will help to ensure that there is minimum duplication of tasks as cost and time efficiency will be important to achieve. Often this may be achieved by the establishment of a centralised agency to administer the programme, operating under the generalised control of the network partners.