

# European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes

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# 1. Current Situation

- Different quality assurance (QA) regimes in Europe:
  - Programme accreditation/evaluation only
  - Institutional accreditation/evaluation/audit only
  - Mixed forms (both or optional, at the institution's choice)
- For joint programmes, three main approaches to external QA:
  - Several (“fragmented”) national reviews
  - Joint review by several QA agencies
  - Single review by one QA agency
- Frameworks for joint and single reviews have been tested (e.g. JOQAR), but are often complex and burdensome
- Quality review of Erasmus Mundus Masters Courses (by Commission) is joint, but does not replace national QA

# 1. Current Situation (cont'd)



- Joint or single reviews need to combine national criteria
  - Not always quality-related, but often structural
  - Can be contradictory (e.g. # of ECTS Master thesis)
  - Sometimes only make sense nationally, but are difficult to understand to foreign peers and agencies
  - Is external QA the place to enforce national legal provisions?
- Joint degrees more difficult than other joint programmes, in some countries even virtually impossible
- **The consequence:**
  - “Fragmented reviews” is often the easiest solution ...
  - ... but does it reflect the joint character of the programme?

## 2. Background of the proposal

- **Bucharest Communiqué (2012)**
  - “recognise quality assurance decisions of EQAR-registered agencies on joint and double degree programmes.”
  - “examine national rules and practices relating to joint programmes and degrees as a way to dismantle obstacles [...]”
- **BFUG work programme 2013-2017**
  - “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.”
- BFUG commissioned a small expert group (Mark Frederiks NL, Achim Hopbach ENQA, Andrejs Rauhvargers LV, Colin Tück EQAR), discussion in Working Groups on Structural Reforms & Mobility and Internationalisation in Dec & Jan

### 3. Proposal - overview



- **The idea:** one agreed and consistent European framework for quality assurance of joint programmes
- Based on the Bologna infrastructure only:
  - Qualifications Framework for the European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA)
  - European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ESG)<sup>1</sup>
- No additional national criteria
- Allow for integrated, single reviews of joint programmes
- Carried out by a suitable EQAR-registered QA agency

<sup>1</sup> The proposal is compatible with the current proposal for the revised ESG.

### 3. Proposal - Standards

- **Standards** for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes
  - Based on QF-EHEA and ESG part 1
  - Applied to specific case of joint programmes:  
joint development and responsibility, several locations and languages, joint provision, ...
- **Issues:**
  - Status, joint design and delivery
  - Learning Outcomes
  - Study Programme
  - Admission and Recognition
  - Learning, Teaching and Assessment
  - Student Support
  - Resources
  - Transparency and Documentation
  - Internal Quality Assurance

# 3. Proposal - Procedure



- **Procedure** for External QA of Joint Programmes
  - Based on ESG (part 2), specified for joint programmes: panel composition, site visit(s) etc.
  - To be used only if external QA at programme level is needed
- **Issues:**
  - Self-Evaluation Report
  - Review Panel
  - Site Visit
  - Review Report
  - Formal Outcome and Decision
  - Appeals
  - Reporting
  - Follow-Up
  - Periodicity

## 4. Application



European Approach, based on ESG & QF-EHEA, and Bucharest Communiqué  
("recognise QA decisions of EQAR-registered agencies on joint and double degree programmes")

Cooperating HEIs  
need **programme  
accreditation/eval.**

**Single accreditation/eval.**  
of JP, based on agreed  
**Standards & Procedure**,  
by any EQAR-reg. agency

Cooperating HEIs are "**self-accrediting**"  
for programmes, i.e. accredited/  
evaluated/audited at institutional level

**Joint internal QA review**  
of the JP (in line with ESG), may use  
**agreed Standards**, external  
review takes account of HEIs' internal

**Recognised to fulfil QA require-  
ments in all countries involved**



## 5. Roadmap



- Ministerial conference Yerevan (May 2015) is expected to
  - Adopt European Approach
  - Renew commitment to recognise QA decisions
- Next step: implementation by EHEA member states
  - Enable recognition of EQAR-registered QAAs' decisions (if programme-level QA required)
  - Adjust legal frameworks where necessary
- HEIs and QAAs to start using the European Approach

## 6. Impact on Institutions

- Joint programmes = joint quality assurance
- More joint responsibility (i.e. for QA)
- More involvement in QA of the whole programme
- One single reference points (= the Standards)
- Simplify process to create/design programmes

