



UNIVERSITÀ DI NAPOLI
L'ORIENTALE

DSUS
DIPARTIMENTO DI
SCIENZE UMANE E SOCIALI



UNIVERSITÀ
di VERONA

FMK | Faculty of
Media and
Communications

2023

Geophilosophy of the Balkans



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Description of IO4 Model and Guide for Implementation

1. Introduction (or Description of work)

To secure the continuation of the project beyond the end of the funding period comprehensive guidelines are required that include among others the following:

- A model and recommendations to all partner universities on how to implement Transdisciplinary Balkan Studies: Geophilosophy of the Balkans (GEOBALKANS),
- An analysis and recommendations of the most suitable accreditation model for the programme, and
- An analysis and recommendations for the modalities for financial sustainability of the programme. In this way, the programme administrative, organisational, and financial functionality and viability will be underpinned securing efficient establishment, impact, and transferability.

Therefore, IO4 describes a stepwise process that will assure the creation of a programme of excellence, which offers a genuine European learning experience to students and is summarized in Figure 1.

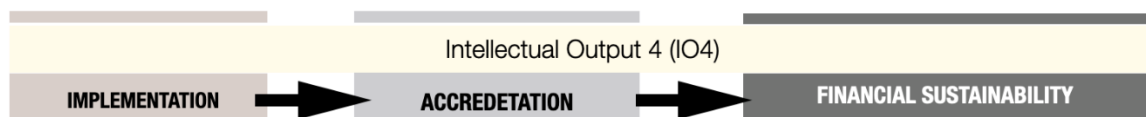


Figure 1. IO4 structure

The development of Intellectual Output 4 was carried out with support and input from all participating organisations. The activity aims to evaluate the quality of the knowledge exchange resulting from GEOBALKANS and on the base of the conclusions to prepare a useful guide for implementation and sustainability of the programme. The guide will give an analysis of some of the key barriers (internal and external) that universities may face during and in the aftermath of the project. Accreditation model and procedures are underlined.

2. Analysis, Models and Recommendations concerning “Transdisciplinary Balkan Studies: Geophilosophy of the Balkans (GEOBALKANS)”

2.1 Implementation

To secure the continuation of the project beyond the end of the funding period a comprehensive guide needs to be produced including a model and recommendations to all

partner universities on how to implement Transdisciplinary Balkan Studies: Geophilosophy of the Balkans (GEOBALKANS). The programme description meets the standards in *Framework for Qualifications of European Higher Education Area* and the requirements of national qualification frameworks. More specifically, when implementing the programme the following information should be well-defined:

1. Name of the degree and name of the study programme,
2. Learning objectives,
3. The programmes' relevance (to society, labour market, etc.),
4. Content, language of instruction,
5. Expected learning outcome on completion of the programme (knowledge, skills, and general competence) and qualifications,
6. The academic structure of the study programme (courses/modules, study progress, specialisation),
7. Admission requirements and requirements for study progress Compulsory requirements for the study programme (for example, the Master's thesis),
8. ECTS credits and students' workload,
9. Teaching methods/pedagogy and syllabus,
10. Assessments and the grading scales used at the respective partner institutions Evaluation of the study programme,
11. Place of study for the different courses,
12. Mobility model (student and teacher mobility),
13. Achieved competence in relation to further studies or work opportunities, and
14. Contact information.

The practical organisation of the programme has been discussed and agreed on in the development stage of GEOBALKANS. At the start of and during the course of studies, student administrative matters must be accommodated. This applies in particular to the online student administrative systems and other logistical matters. Partner universities should establish a system for continuous evaluation and improvement of student administration systems and the academic content of the study programme. Regular meetings, telephone conferences and similar should be organised for individuals with academic and administrative responsibilities during the operational phase. Regular meetings create a sense of security, fellowship and involvement and strengthen the bonds between colleagues across institutional and national boundaries.¹

Regarding admission issues, it is recommended that admission is carried out jointly by the partner institutions and with common criteria for admission. This underpins the idea of joint responsibility for the study programme. It is also recommended that the partner institutions agree on appeal procedures. It is often natural for the coordinating institution to be responsible for the practical aspects of admission, while decisions on who should be admitted

¹ EU has produced a handbook concerning the running of joint degrees based on "good practices" developed by six chosen Erasmus Mundus programmes.

are made jointly by the academic staff involved in the study programme. If the coordinator is responsible for admission, the coordinator sends out a common letter of admission on behalf of the partner institutions when the applications have been processed. The coordinator also sends out a letter of refusal and information about waiting lists.

To facilitate the process of arrival and housing matters, continuous contact with the admitted student is in place from the time of selection/admission until the start of the programme (arrival). If an admitted student wants to decline the offer of admission it is important to get that information as early as possible in order to make the seat available for the next person in line. Information to all admitted students, containing practical matters such as programme specific information (literature, schedules etc) is provided, along with information about housing services needs to be clearly communicated.

The successful implementation of joint programmes rests on careful planning in the early stages of the development process. First, the involved instructors need to allocate fields of responsibility and agree on methods for communication that will assure a joint planning of tuition. The pedagogical standpoint that will serve as foundation for the planning and carrying out of the programme must be decided. Based on intended learning outcomes and didactic considerations in relation to the included subject areas, instructors will also need to decide on various aspects regarding teaching methods, knowledge and skills acquisition, proportion of campus and net based learning, course materials and progression and degree of flexibility offered to students. Other important areas for consideration are evaluation criteria and quality assessment as well as pedagogical, technical and library support for the involved teachers. Courses should be designed with the intended learning outcomes, suitable learning activities, and examination methods in mind. These three aspects should serve as base for the allocation of responsibilities within the teaching team. Communication channels for interaction and feedback between teachers and students must be put in place as must methods for handling accessibility, authentication, and passwords. Continuous evaluation during and summative evaluation after each course is planned for and should be carried out. Measures for managing feedback to and from students should be monitored via questionnaires administrated to students and student representatives are included in planning meetings.

Concerning the Diploma issue, the minimum information that should be included the student's name the student's date of birth, the name of the issuing institution and the degree that has been awarded. The contents and format of the Diploma and the Diploma Supplement should be clarified at least one semester before the first intake of students is expected to complete the degree.

Information about learning outcomes and *employability* that can be expected to strengthen candidates' position on the labour market after completion of the programme should be emphasised. It will also be an advantage to highlight any collaboration with public bodies in connection with recruitment, as well as if the partners agree on who is responsible for answering questions from potential applicants.

2.2 Accreditation

To secure a timely start of the program the accreditation process, the development of the programme and the implementation model were developed simultaneously. That is, in parallel with the finalisation of the curricula for the MA programme in month 16 an accreditation proposal and request (European and/or national) was prepared with all partners and submitted to the relevant authorities. The same procedure will be repeated in month 30, in parallel with finalising of the PhD programme outlook.

IO4 gives an insight into the best practices and models for programme accreditation. Essentially, to secure the establishment and sustainability of the joint, integrated graduate programme, adequate and suitable accreditation strategies are considered. Having carefully studied the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) of the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes, the proposed accreditation model is built on and includes the discussions of the accreditation procedures with all partners.

2.2.1 Review of the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes²

Joint programmes are understood as an integrated curriculum coordinated and offered jointly by different higher education institutions from the European Higher Educational Area (EHEA) countries and leading to double/multiple degrees³ or a joint degree⁴.

Forty-nine countries and the European Commission currently constitute the members of the EHEA. Figure 2 presents the respective mapping of the EHEA countries.



Figure 2. EHEA member countries

Regarding the countries participating in GEOBALKANS, Greece and Italy have been a full member of the Bologna Process / European Higher Education Area since 1999, and Serbia since 2003 (initially as Serbia-Montenegro).

² https://www.eqar.eu/assets/uploads/2018/04/02_European_Approach_QA_of_Joint_Programmes_v1_0.pdf

³ 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').

⁴ A single document awarded by higher education institutions offering the joint programme and nationally acknowledged as the recognised award of the joint programme.

The accreditation procedure described in this Section relates only to joint programmes offered jointly by higher education institutions from two or more countries and does not address the quality assurance of programmes delivered jointly by different institutions from a single country.

Standards for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes in the EHEA

There are nine specific Standards that are required to assure quality of Joint Programmes in the EHEA, which are summarized in Figure 3.



Figure 3. Standards for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes in the EHEA

A short description of each Standard is now provided.

1. Eligibility

There are three aspects that need to be considered under the first Standard, (1) **Status**, (2) **Joint Design and Delivery**, and (3) **Cooperation Agreement**.

Regarding **Status** partner institutions should be recognised as higher education institutions by the relevant authorities of their countries. Their respective national legal frameworks should enable them to participate in the joint programme and, if applicable, to award a joint degree. The institutions awarding the degree should ensure that it belong to the higher education degree systems of the countries in which they are based. Moreover, in relation to **Joint design and delivery**, the programme should be offered jointly, involving all cooperating institutions in the design and delivery of the programme. The terms and conditions of the joint programme should be laid down in a **Cooperation Agreement**. The agreement should cover the following issues in particular:

- 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.

2. Learning Outcomes

The second Standard contains requirements pertaining to learning outcomes and more specifically to (1) the **Level**, (2) the **Disciplinary Field**, (3) **Achievement**, and (4) **Regulated Professions**.

More specifically, the intended learning outcomes should align with the corresponding level in the Framework for Qualifications in the European Higher Education Area (FQ-EHEA), as well as the applicable national qualifications frameworks. Learning outcomes should also comprise knowledge, skills, and competencies in the respective disciplinary fields. Moreover, the programme should be able to demonstrate that the intended learning outcomes are achieved. If relevant for the specific joint programme, the minimum agreed training conditions specified in the European Union Directive 2005/36/EC, or relevant common trainings frameworks established under the Directive, should be taken into account.

3. Study Programme

The (1) **Curriculum**, (2) **Credits**, and (3) **Workload** of the Study Programme are examined in Standard 3 requiring the following:

- The structure and content of the curriculum should be fit to enable the students to achieve the intended learning outcomes (Curriculum).
- The European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) should be applied properly, and the distribution of credits should be clear (Credits).
- A joint master programme will typically amount to 90-120 ECTS-credits and should not be less than 60 ECTS-credits at second cycle level (credit ranges according to the FQ-EHEA). The workload and the average time to complete the programme should be monitored (Workload).

4. Admission and Recognition

Important elements contained in the fourth Standard are: (1) **Admission** of students in the Study Programme, and (2) **Recognition** of acquired qualifications.

The admission requirements and selection procedures should be appropriate in light of the programme's level and discipline. Recognition of qualifications and of periods of studies (including recognition of prior learning) should be applied in line with the Lisbon Recognition Convention and subsidiary documents.

5. Learning, Teaching and Assessment

The fifth Standard aims to guarantee that the study programme corresponds to the promised learning outcomes, while setting the rules for students' assessment.

More specifically, the study programme should be designed to correspond with the intended learning outcomes, and the **learning and teaching** approaches applied should be adequate to achieve them. The diversity of students and their needs should be respected and attended to, especially in view of potential different cultural backgrounds of the students. The examination

regulations and the **assessment** of the achieved learning outcomes should correspond with the intended learning outcomes, and they should be applied consistently among partner institutions.

6. Student Support

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

7. Resources

This Standard aims at drawing standards linked to the study programme's resources, and more specifically to resources associated with (1) **Staff**, and (2) **Facilities**. To be more precise, the staff should be sufficient and adequate in relation to their qualifications, professional and international experience to implement the study programme. The facilities provided should be sufficient and adequate in view of the intended learning outcomes.

8. Transparency and Documentation

Relevant information about the programme, such as admission requirements and procedures, course catalogue, examination, and assessment procedures, should be well documented and published by taking into account specific needs of mobile students.

9. Quality Assurance

Last but not least, for a study programme to be deemed successful and well implemented the cooperating institutions should apply joint internal quality assurance processes in accordance with the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) in concern with the **application of Different Systems of External Quality Assurance (QA)**. More specifically, the European Approach should be applied depending on the needs of the cooperating higher education institutions and the requirements of their national frameworks:

- If some of the **cooperating higher education institutions require external quality assurance at programme level** (e.g., programme accreditation or evaluation is mandatory), then the cooperating institutions should select a suitable quality assurance agency from the list of EQAR-registered agencies. The agency will use the nine Standards and the Procedure described in the next subsection, to carry out a single evaluation or accreditation of the entire joint programme. The result is to be accepted in all EHEA countries. Dependent on the national legal framework, the external quality assurance decision should come into force or be recognised in all countries where the programme is offered, as agreed in the Bucharest Communiqué.
- If **all cooperating higher education institutions** are subject to **external quality assurance at institutional level** only and have "self-accrediting" status, they may use the European Approach in setting up joint internal approval and monitoring processes for their joint programmes (according to Standard 1) if they deem it useful in their context. Hence, in these cases no additional external evaluation or accreditation procedures at the programme level are necessary.

- The European Approach may also be used for joint programmes that are offered by higher education institutions from both within and outside the EHEA. Involved institutions from non-EHEA countries are encouraged to inquire whether their national authorities would accept the Standards and be able to recognise the decision of an EQAR-registered agency, if applicable.

Summarizing the Standards required are depicted in Figure 4.



Figure 4. Summary of ESGs

Procedure for External Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes in the EHEA

The cooperating institutions should jointly select a suitable EQAR-registered quality assurance agency. The agency should communicate appropriately with the competent national authorities of the countries in which the cooperating higher education institutions are based. Figure 5 exhibits the steps that should be followed in order to complete an External Quality Assurance of a Joint Programme.

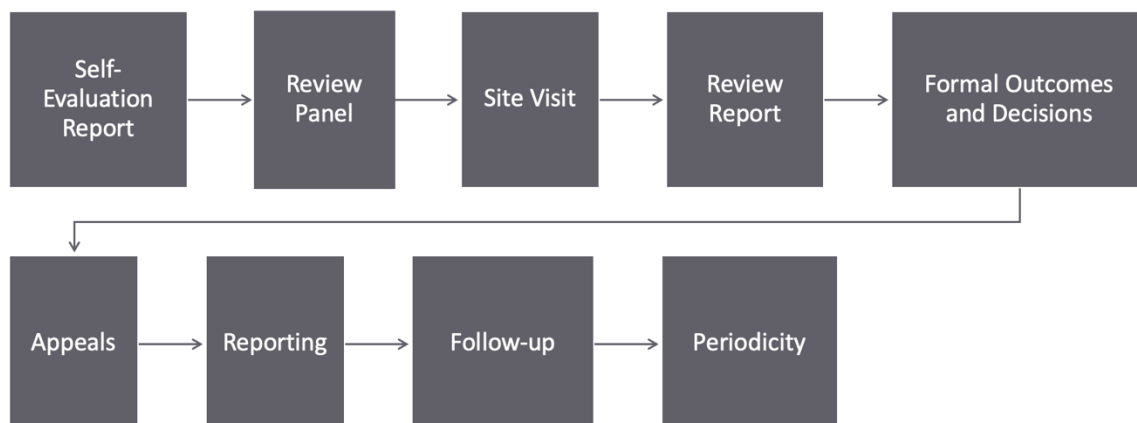


Figure 5. Procedure for External Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes in the EHEA

1. Self-Evaluation Report (SER)

The external quality assurance procedure should be based on a self-evaluation report jointly submitted by the cooperating institutions. The SER should contain comprehensive information that demonstrates the compliance of the programme with the Standards for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes presented in Section 2.2.1. In addition, the report should contain the necessary information about the respective national frameworks of the cooperating institutions that foreign agencies and experts might need in order to appreciate the context, especially the positioning of the programme within the national higher education systems. The SER should focus explicitly on the distinctive feature of the joint programme as a joint endeavour of higher education institutions from more than one national higher education system.

2. Review Panel

The agency should appoint a panel of at least four members. The panel should combine expertise in the relevant subject(s) or discipline(s), including the labour market/world of work in the relevant field(s), and expertise in quality assurance in higher education. Through their international expertise and experience the panel should be able to take into account the distinctive features of the joint programme. Collectively, the panel should possess knowledge of the HE systems of the HEIs involved and the language(s) of instruction used. The panel should include members from at least two countries involved in the consortium providing the programme. The panel should include at least one student.

The agency should ensure the impartiality of the experts and observes fairness towards the applying higher education institutions. To this end, the institutions should have the right to raise well-grounded objections against a panel member, but not a right to veto their appointment.

The agency should brief the experts on the review activity, their specific role, and the specifics of the quality assurance procedure. The briefing should focus particularly on the distinctive features of a joint programme.

3. Site Visit

The site visit should enable the review panel to discuss the joint programme based on the self-evaluation report and assess whether the programme complies with the Standards (Section 2.2.1). 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 must be taken into account.

4. Review Report

The review panel should prepare a report that contains relevant evidence, analysis and conclusions with regard to the Standards. The report should also contain recommendations for developing the programme further. In case the review results in a formal outcome the review panel should make a recommendation for the decision. The conclusions and recommendations should pay particular attention to the distinctive features of the joint programme. The institutions should have the opportunity to comment on a draft version of the review report and request correction of factual errors.

5. Formal Outcomes and Decision

If required, the agency should take a decision on the basis of the review report and the recommendation for the decision, considering the comments by the higher education institutions as appropriate. In case the review results in an accreditation decision, it grants or denies the accreditation (with or without conditions), based on the Standards (part B). The agency may supplement the formal outcome and the accreditation decision by recommendations. The agency should give reasons for its accreditation decision. This applies in particular for accreditation decisions limited by conditions or negative decisions and for cases where the decision differs from the review panel's conclusions and recommendation for the decision.

6. Appeals

The institutions should have the right to appeal against a formal outcome or an accreditation decision. Therefore, the agency should have a formalised appeals procedure in place.

7. Reporting

The agency should publish the review report and, if applicable, the formal outcome or the accreditation decision on its website. In case the review was not conducted in English at least an English summary of the review report and an English version of the decision, including its reasons, should be published.

8. Follow-up

The agency should agree 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. Periodicity

The joint programme should be reviewed periodically every 6 years, which should be specified in the published decision. If there is an accreditation decision it should be granted – if the decision is positive – for a period of 6 years.⁷ During the 6-year period, the agency should be informed about changes in the consortium offering the joint programme.

2.2.2 Review of the national accreditation approaches and procedures

This subsection provides the reader with a review of the national accreditation approaches and procedures that hold in all partner Universities. Information was selected via a questionnaire distributed to partners that included respective information such as the following:

- What are the respective national frameworks of the cooperating institutions that foreign stakeholders and/or experts might need to consider in order to appreciate the context, especially the positioning of the programme within the national higher education systems?
- In Greece, each Higher Education Institution forms and implements an internal quality assurance system that covers the entire range of tasks and activities of the Institution. Is there something similar to partner countries?
- Do post-graduate programmes in cooperating organisations follow an internal quality assurance procedure?
- Do post-graduate programmes in cooperating organisations submit a self-evaluation report (SER)?
- Do partner higher education institutions require external quality assurance at programme level (e.g., programme accreditation or evaluation is mandatory)?
- Are cooperating higher education institutions subjected to external quality assurance at institutional level only?
- Is there a national accreditation procedure for post-graduate programmes in place?
 - If yes, does it abide by the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes?
- What is the competent national authority in each partner country in which the cooperating higher education institution is based? (HAHE in Greece)
- Have post-graduate studies been already accredited in partner countries?
- How many universities have post-graduate studies that have already been accredited in partner countries?
- Are partner institutions accredited institutions within their national systems?



University of Singidunum, Serbia

Any Serbian institution needs to follow the guidelines for a joint program outlined by the national accreditation commission. However, it is difficult for Serbian institutions to develop a joint degree, which is why most existing joint programs issue dual degrees.

There is an internal quality assurance system that forms and implements an internal quality assurance system that covers the entire range of tasks and activities of the Institution. Post-graduate programmes in particular follow an internal quality assurance procedure and they

submit a self-evaluation report. National accreditation is mandatory and external quality assurance is performed by the national accreditation commission. There is a national accreditation procedure for post-graduate programmes. Serbia is in the process of regaining its membership in the European Agency and is largely aligned with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG). Therefore, it is anticipated that the remaining discrepancies should not be a problem for the accreditation of a joint program.

The competent national authority in Serbia is the National Entity for Accreditation and Quality Assurance in Higher Education (NEAQA) (<https://www.nat.rs/en/default-page/>). The NEAQA performs activities of accreditation and quality assurance of higher education institutions and their units, evaluation of study programs and quality assurance in higher education. The aim of NEAQA is to improve higher education in Serbia by ensuring its compliance with internationally recognized standards for accreditation and quality assurance, as well as to raise the training level of reviewers and to ensure their independence, and especially their professional and ethical behaviour in the process of accreditation and quality assurance.

Post-graduate studies have been accredited in Serbia and there are about ten post-graduate studies that have already been accredited. The University of Singidunum is an accredited institution.



Università Delgi Studi de Verona, Italy

In the University of Verona there exists a system called 'QUALITY ASSURANCE' <https://www.univr.it/en/quality-assurance> which forms and implements an internal quality assurance system that covers the entire range of tasks and activities of the Institution. The 'Quality Assurance' is responsible for a range of activities, such as:

- to implement measures specifically aimed at achieving the University's quality objectives in teaching and research, such as design, implementation, observation (monitoring) and check procedures;
- to carry out a process of continuing improvement of objectives, and tools to be used in order to achieve them, as well as the relevant implementation measures;
- to engage the University's employees. This will be done in order to achieve the following objectives: to enable employees to perform well; to offer efficient services; to track what is being done in order to monitor and measure the results;
- to improve the confidence of students, the social community and work representatives in the ability of our University to achieve quality objectives.

The University has a [Quality Assurance framework](#), which outlines objectives, roles and procedures in the QA system. Specific quality objectives are set in the University's [strategic plans and guidelines](#).

The Quality Assurance initiatives, responding to the measures issued by the National Agency for the Assessment of the University System and Research (ANVUR), involve various aspects of the University environment (teaching, research, third mission, administration).

There is a specific Commission for the monitoring of the quality of post-graduate programmes and the principles of quality observation for the programmes are fully described in the following guidelines, where five articles refer to specifically the implementation of master's programme, (Article 3: Definition and Characteristics, Article 4: Admission requirements and incompatibility, Article 5: Verification tests. Final exam. Achievement of the title, Article 6: Enrolment in single modules of a Master, and Article 7: Listeners, <https://docs.univr.it/documenti/Documento/allegati/allegati206269.pdf>)

The University of Verona require external quality assurance at programme level and responsible Organisation is MIUR (the Ministry of Education, University and Research of Italy).

There is a national accreditation procedure for post-graduate programmes in place that is governed by MIUR and post-graduate studies been already accredited in Italy. The University of Verona is an accredited institutions within the Italian national system.



Università Delgi Studi de Napoli l' Orientale, Italy

The Universita Delgi Studi de Napoli l' Orientale has the following internal quality assurance system and relevant information can be found in the Nucleo di Valutazione /Assicurazione Qualità (Evaluation / Quality Assurance Unit) (<https://www.unior.it/ateneo/17570/1/compiti-e-attivita.html>)

It is whereby described that:

The University Evaluation Unit was established with D.R. of 11/4/1997, in compliance with Law 537/93 art.5, paragraph 22 which reads as follows: 'In the Universities, where they do not already exist, internal evaluation units are established with the task of verifying, by analyzing comparative costs and returns, the correct management of public resources, the productivity of research and teaching, as well as the impartiality and good performance of the administrative action. management, to which they report annually with a specific report'.

The Unit, a collegial body with operational autonomy, is governed by the Regulations issued with D.R. n. 7 of 8/1/2019, and 'aims', in accordance with the provisions of art. 27 of the Statute of the University of Naples 'L'Orientale' issued with D.R. n. 960 of 23/12/2016, published in the Official Gazette - General Series - n.13 of January 17, 2017, cc. 5-7.9, the good

governance of the University and, to this end, exercises, through the evaluation, the function of:

- a) verification of the quality and effectiveness of the teaching offered, also on the basis of the indicators identified by the joint teacher-student committees referred to in art. 52;
- b) verification of the research activity carried out by the Departments;
- c) evaluation of interventions to support the right to education;
- d) verification of the adequacy of the scientific or professional curriculum of the holders of teaching contracts;
- e) verifies, also through comparative analysis of costs and yields, the correct use of public resources, the productivity of research and teaching, as well as the impartiality and good performance of administrative action.

The Evaluation Unit also functions as an Independent Evaluation Body (O.I.V), on the basis of the A.N.A.C. n. 9/2010 regarding the applicability of Legislative Decree no. 150/2009 to universities.

According to the provisions of art. 27 of the Statute of the University of Naples 'L'Orientale' issued with D.R. n. 960 of 23/12/2016, published in the Official Gazette - General Series - n.13 of January 17, 2017, cc. 1-4, the Evaluation Committee is made up of five members and the representation of the students:

- a) the representation of students, equal to 15% of the total number of members, calculated with the criterion of arithmetic rounding, elected according to the procedures established by the electoral regulations;
- b) four members from outside the University, chosen, possibly, even in a non-academic context, from among scholars and experts with a high professional qualification in the field of evaluation;
- c) the Coordinator identified among the full professors of the University who are experts in the field of evaluation.

Post-graduate programmes i follow an internal quality assurance procedure and they submit a self-evaluation report (SER) called riesame ciclico (cyclical review).

The University of Verona requires external quality assurance at programme level (e.g., programme accreditation or evaluation is mandatory) and this is provided by MIUR (the Ministry of Education, University and Research of Italy).

Quality assurance is guaranteed at institutional level (internal) and to national level (MIUR and European guidelines).

There is a national accreditation procedure for post-graduate programmes in place that is governed by MIUR, and post-graduate studies been already accredited in the country. UNIOR still does not run any Joint Programmes, however it is an accredited institution.

Law on higher education (official journal RM 82/2018, as amended 2021). This law regulate the autonomy of the university and its academic freedom, the requirements and the procedure of establishment, changes in status and termination of operation of higher education institutions, their activity, the system of provision and assessment of the quality of higher education, the grounds of organisation, governance, development and funding of the higher education activity, students' rights and responsibilities, recognition of foreign higher education qualifications, and the oversight of the work of the higher education institutions.

Decree on norms and standards for establishing higher education institutions and performing higher education activities (official journal RM 103/2010) defines the norms and standards for the conditions that must be met for the establishment of higher education institutions and the completion of higher education activities are determined.

Law on national framework of qualifications official journal RM 137/2013 and 30/2016)) this law regulates the national framework of qualifications, the levels and sub-levels of qualifications, types of qualifications, the scope of qualifications, the competent bodies for the proposal, adoption and classification of qualifications, the competent institutions that will act in accordance with this law, as well as the connection of the national framework of qualifications with the European framework of qualifications and the qualification framework of the European area of higher education.

Decree on national framework of qualifications (2010) establishing the national framework of higher education qualifications, which more closely determines the profile, goals and starting points for the formation of study programs from the first, second and third cycle of studies, as well as study programs for vocational education shorter than three years.

Ordinance on the organization, work, methods of decision-making, methodology for accreditation and evaluation, standards for accreditation and evaluation, such other issues of relationship with the board for accreditation and evaluation in higher education (official journal off rm 163/2012), prescribes the organization, the work, the method of decision-making, the methodology for accreditation and evaluation, standards for accreditation and evaluation, as well as other issues related to the board for accreditation and evaluation of he.

Ordinance on the mandatory components of the study programs of the first, second and third cycles of study (official journal RM 25/2011) regulates the mandatory components that must be included in the study programs of the first, second and third cycle of studies.

The Agency for the Quality in the Higher Education instruction on elaborates for accreditation of study programmes.

- Classification of scientific areas, fields and areas according to the International Frascati Classification;

- 3 Rulebook on the organization, work, decision-making, methodology for accreditation and evaluation, standards for accreditation and evaluation, as well as other issues related to the work of the Board for Accreditation and Evaluation of Higher Education (Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia, No. 151 /12);
- Rulebook on the mandatory components that study programs from the first, second and third cycle of studies should have (Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia, no. 25/11);
- Guidelines for the criteria for ensuring and assessing the quality of higher education institutions and academic staff in the Republic of North Macedonia (Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia, no. 67/13);
- Rulebook on the content and form of the diploma, instructions for the preparation of supplements to the diploma and other public documents ("Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia" no. 84/09);
- Rulebook on the closer criteria and competence of the boards for cooperation and trust with the public ("Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia" no. 148/13);
- Rulebook on the method and conditions for organizing practical teaching for students ("Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia" no. 71/09 and 120/10);
- Rulebook on the conditions to be met by the distinguished expert from the practice of the relevant area for the performance of clinical teaching ("Sl. Republic of North Macedonia" no. 71/09 and 120/10);
- Rulebook on the method and procedure for managing the database for higher education activity ("Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia" no. 65/13);
- Law on scientific research activity ("Sl. Republic of North Macedonia" no. 46/08, 103/08, 24/11 and 80/12);
- Statute of the AUE FON;
- The decision on accreditation of the higher education institution issued by the Board for Accreditation and Evaluation of Higher Education of the Republic of North Macedonia;
- Decisions for accreditation of programmes.

The AUE FON adopted quality assurance strategy - document in the area of establishment, monitoring and improvement of the quality system of the American University of Europe - FON in Skopje. The determination of the University for constant and systematic work on the improvement of the quality management system in all areas of its activity is defined by the Quality Policy of AUE - FON. The activities are defined in Quality Assurance Action plan.

Post-graduate programmes in cooperating organisations follow an internal quality assurance procedure and they submit a self-evaluation report in accordance with the university guidelines for self-assessment and quality assurance and assessment of university units.

AUE - FON do not require external quality assurance at programme level but is subjected to external quality assurance at institutional level only. A national accreditation procedure for post-graduate programmes is in place. The competent national authority is the National Council on Higher Education and Scientific and Research Activity and Agency for the Quality in the Higher Education [A.K.B.O. | Агенција за квалитет во високото образование \(akvo.mk\)](http://akvo.mk) implements the system of ensuring, assessing, developing and promoting the higher education. The system of ensuring, assessing, developing and promoting the quality of higher education covers:

- the approval, verification and recognition of the higher education institution and the Study Programmes for performance of the higher education activity in compliance with this Law, which shall be accomplished through the system of accreditation (hereinafter: accreditation);
- the assessment of the quality of performance of the higher education activity, of the governance, funding, academic and other activities and their priorities, which shall be accomplished through the system of evaluation (hereinafter: evaluation), and
- other activities and mechanisms that shall develop and maintain the quality of the higher education stipulated in the Law and the acts of the National Council on Higher Education and Scientific and Research Activity.

The Agency for Quality in Higher Education (AKVO) is an independent professional body. Bodies of AKVO are: Board for Accreditation of Higher Education, Board for Evaluation of Higher Education and Director of the Agency for Quality of Higher Education.

The mission of AKVO:

- Implementation of the system of provision, assessment, development and promotion of higher education in the Republic of North Macedonia.
- Maintaining quality standards and promoting and improving the quality of higher education institutions and their study programs (in accordance with the accepted standards and procedures of the guide applied by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education).

The Board for Accreditation of Higher Education, a collective body that determines the conditions for performing higher education activity and determines the study capacity of the higher education institution; adopts a decision on accreditation of the project for the establishment of an independent private or private-public higher education institution and their units; decides on the accreditation of a scientific institution for performing higher education activities of studies from the second and third cycle of studies; determines fulfillment of the conditions for organizing studies for new study programs of the higher education institution; decides on the accreditation of mentors of doctoral studies; and performs other tasks determined by the Law on Higher Education ("Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia" No. 82/2018).

The Board for the Evaluation of Higher Education is a collective professional body that monitors the activity of higher education institutions that have been given accreditation and a decision to start work; monitors and evaluates the quality of higher education activities, scientific research, artistic and professional work of the academic staff of higher education institutions, and especially of their study programs (in accordance with the accepted standards and procedures of the guide applied by the European Association for Quality Assurance in higher education); and performs other tasks determined by the Law on Higher Education ("Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia" No. 82/2018).

AKVO is an associate member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA).

Post-graduate studies have been already accredited in North Macedonia but none in the area of Geo-philosophy of Balkans

The list of the universities that have post-graduate studies that have already been accredited can be found here: [A.K.B.O. | Агенција за квалитет во високото образование \(akvo.mk\)](http://A.K.B.O. | Агенција за квалитет во високото образование (akvo.mk))

AUE - FON is an accredited institution and the decision on the fulfillment of the conditions to start work and the activity issued by the Ministry of Education and Science 12-2233/2 from 04.07.2007; Accreditation decision of the higher education institution issued by the Board of accreditation and evaluation of higher education SI. 12 of 14.0.



Panteion University of Social and Political Sciences

The Panteion University Quality Assurance Unit (MODIP) is the central coordinating body for all quality assurance and assessment processes of the Institute. It is formed by decision of the University Senate, the supreme collective body of the Institute, which also specifies its composition, organisation, operation and responsibilities. The Panteion University academic quality policy aims to ensure the university's improvement through adopting best practices and ensuring quality teaching practices for its students. This strategic and ongoing improvement is achieved by integrating quality assessment methods for the work conducted and the services offered at all levels.

Since its establishment, Panteion University has been adhering to a broader philosophy that promotes quality based on the following fundamental principles:

- I. To advance science and disseminate knowledge as part of the educational process, as a public university.
- II. To foster academic freedom in teaching and research, as well as free expression and circulation of ideas, to the extent specified by the Constitution, the law of the State, and the regulatory obligations and standards pertaining to it.

- III. To support meritocracy in all processes involving faculty (DEP) members and staff.
- IV. To continuously develop and update the undergraduate and postgraduate programmes offered.
- V. To have students participating in all the procedures that concern them.

The object of the Quality Policy and the mission of the Quality Management System that the Institute has developed and implements – and which governs its structure, organisation and operation – is to contribute to putting these principles into practice. The Panteion University Administration pledges to its students, academic staff, associates and other staff to abide by and continuously improve the effectiveness of the Quality Management System and to provide all financial, technical and human resources required. Moreover, in Greece, each Higher Education Institution forms and implements an internal quality assurance system that covers the entire range of tasks and activities of the Institution. Panteion University is an accredited institution, however the accreditation procedure for post-graduate programmes has just started in Greece and is scheduled for the year 2023. In general, post-graduate programmes must follow an internal quality assurance procedure and post-graduate programmes are now forming their accreditation material ready for evaluation. Post-graduate programmes at Panteion University have not submitted a self-evaluation report (SER) yet. Quality assurance at post-programme level is mandatory, meaning that all post-graduate programmes in Greece will now undergo the accreditation procedure. Panteion University is subjected to external quality assurance at institutional level, graduate, and post-graduate level. The University and all graduate programmes have been accredited by the national authority, called Hellenic Authority for Higher Education (HAHE), which abides by the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes.

2.2.3 Model and Recommendations for GEOBALKANS' Accreditation

Accreditation of the post-graduate study programme (GEOBALKANS) should follow specific principles guided by the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes and national accreditation procedures.

Principles are divided into general principles, principles related to educational, organisational and financial aspects of the study programme.

Study Programme/Eligibility

A full description of the reasons for launching GEOBALKANS needs to be given, along with a self-evaluation of the programme justification, especially regarding national scientific development and linked national strategic priorities, comparability with programmes of distinguished higher education institutions from other EU countries, and past experience of the partner organisations in carrying out postgraduate study programmes.

Learning Outcomes

Learning outcomes must be described in detail. The criteria and procedure of the intended learning outcomes should align with a master's level as described in the Framework for Qualifications in the European Higher Education Area (FQ-EHEA), as well as the applicable

national qualifications framework(s). Learning outcomes should also comprise knowledge, skills, and competencies in the respective disciplinary field. Moreover, the programme should be able to demonstrate that the intended learning outcomes are achieved. A system of guidance throughout the study period should be in place by appointing tutors, whose obligations are clearly defined. The number of publications relating to the master thesis produced in GEOBALKANS can be also monitored.

Study Programme

The structure and content of the curriculum, courses' description (outline)⁵, the distribution of ECTS credits to courses, and the definition of the total amount of ECTS credits needed to successfully complete the GEOBALKANS programme (total workload) should be in order. The study programme should outline in detail the obligatory and elective activities of the programme.

Admission and Recognition

Student selection is a key issue for the successful implementation of GEOBALKANS, which is highly selective in admitting students. Specific criteria on the minimum average grade obtained in the course of a relevant academic bachelor's programme, the minimal final mark for one's bachelor's thesis, or the requirement of having been among the top-5 or top-10 percent of one's Bachelor's cohort, and exceptional knowledge of English, are examined. Recognition of qualifications and of periods of studies (including recognition of prior learning) are applied in line with the Lisbon Recognition Convention and subsidiary documents.

Learning, Teaching and Assessment

This principle aims to guarantee that the study programme corresponds to the promised learning outcomes, while setting the rules for students' assessment.

The workload and the average time to complete the programme should be monitored, whereas conditions under which students who have dropped out or lost the right of studying can continue their studies should be clarified. The procedure and conditions for the evaluation of master thesis should also be well-defined. Possibilities for continuing research, for doctoral education and/or employment in public and private sector should also be provided. The study programme should describe in detail the methods of quality assurance of each subject and/or module (via a questionnaire administrated to students). The diversity of students and their needs should be respected and attended to, especially in view of potential different cultural backgrounds of the students.

Student Support

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

Resources

⁵ An example of a course description can be found in the Appendix.

This principle is specifically intended to resources associated with staff, and facilities linked to GEOBALKANS. Both staff and facilities provided should be sufficient and adequate in view of the intended learning outcomes.

Transparency and Documentation

Relevant information about the programme, such as admission requirements and procedures, course description, examination and assessment procedures, should be well documented and published (in GEOBALKANS' webpage) by taking into account specific needs of mobile students.

Quality Assurance

GEOBALKANS has from the start applied a joint internal quality assurance to reassure success in the implementation of the study programme in accordance with the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG).

2.3 Financial Sustainability

Financial sustainability issues that go beyond the 3 years project period will be also thoroughly reviewed and included in the guide. This includes strategies for securing financial sustainability of the programme, possibly through:

- A review of the funding opportunities under the Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees (EMJMD) programme which provides eligible organisations with the opportunity to jointly organise and run Master degree programmes. GEOBALKANS, being executed by a consortium of 3 or 4 European institutions and having previously acquired national accreditations, can possibly look for funding under this programme for four consecutive academic years
- A review of the funding opportunities under Horizon 2020 premises on Science with and for Society including Science Education, Promoting Gender Equality in Research and Innovation, Public Engagement in Responsible Research and Innovation, Responsible research & innovation, Ethics Open Science (Open Access) to possibly secure funding of the GEOBALKANS and its post-project phase activities, and
- A review of the funding opportunities under EU's IPA funds on Democracy and Government, Rule of law & Fundamental rights as well as Social development [Quality Education and Training] to secure possible funding for the GEOBALKANS following the end of the three years project period.

Joint programmes are more demanding in terms of resources than ordinary study programmes. The costs relating to joint programmes are considerable in connection with the planning and running of the programme. The costs depend on whether or not the institution is a coordinator, the number of partners and access to external funding.

It is possible, nonetheless, to apply for operational funding from the following programmes:

Erasmus Mundus Joint Masters (EMJM)⁶

⁶ <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/programme-guide/part-b/key-action-2/erasmus-mundus>

Grants operational funding to the collaborating institutions, and scholarships to European students and third-country students. Financial support for an Erasmus Mundus programme presupposes that the programme has already been developed and can be started shortly. The deadline for applications to Erasmus Mundus II, Action 1, is usually in February.

The EMJM supports high-level integrated transnational study programmes at Master level 1 delivered by an international consortium of higher education institutions (HEIs) from different countries worldwide and, where relevant, other educational and/or non-educational partners with specific expertise and interest in the concerned study areas/professional domains. EMJMs are programmes of excellence and should contribute to the integration and internationalisation of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). The specificity of EMJMs lies in the high degree of jointness/integration among the participating institutions and the excellence of their academic content.

Objectives of the EMJM

The EMJM aims to enhance the attractiveness and excellence of European higher education in the world and attract talent to Europe, through a combination of:

1. institutional academic cooperation to showcase European excellence in higher education, and
2. individual mobility for all students taking part in the EMJM, with EU-funded scholarships for the best students applying

Eligibility criteria

In order to be eligible for an Erasmus grant, project proposals for Erasmus Mundus Joint Masters must comply with the following criteria:

- Any eligible participating higher education institution established in an EU Member State, or third country associated to the Programme or third country not associated to the Programme can submit an application.
- A participating organisation can be any public or private organisation, with its affiliated entities (if any) established in an EU Member State or third country associated to the Programme or in a third country not associated to the Programme that contributes directly and actively to the delivery of the EMJM.
- HEIs established in a EU Member State or third country associated to the Programme must hold a valid Erasmus Charter for Higher Education (ECHE). An ECHE is not required for participating HEIs from third countries not associated to the Programme, but they will have to commit to its principles.
- At application stage 2 full partner HEIs must demonstrate to have fulfilled the external Quality Assurance (QA) requirements of their jurisdiction (e.g. accreditation or evaluation) for the joint programme. This can result either (i) from having successfully implemented the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes (if national legislation allows), (ii) or be based on a specific accreditation/evaluation of the joint programme, (iii) or of each national component on the basis of which the EMJM is composed.

- Additionally the EMJM study programme may also benefit from the involvement of associated partners (optional). These organisations contribute indirectly to the implementation of specific tasks/activities and/or support the dissemination and sustainability of the EMJM. Such contribution may for example take the form of knowledge and skills transfer, the provision of complementary courses or backing possibilities for secondment or placement. For eligibility and contractual management aspects, they are not considered as beneficiaries of the Programme funding.

Number and profile of participating organisations

An EMJM involves at least three full partner HEIs from three different countries, of which at least two must be EU Member States or third countries associated to the Programme.

Eligible participants

An EMJM enrolls students at Master level who have obtained a first higher education degree or demonstrate a recognised equivalent level of learning according to national legislation and practices in the degree-awarding countries/institutions. Students who have previously obtained an EMJM scholarship are not eligible to apply for an additional scholarship under the EMJM. EMJM scholarships can be offered to students from all over the world. However, consortia should ensure geographical balance – i.e., no more than 10% of the total number of scholarships awarded during project implementation should be awarded to candidates from the same nationality (this rule does not apply to top up scholarships for targeted regions of the world, if applicable).

Venue(s) of the activities, when applicable

EMJM includes compulsory physical mobility for all enrolled students (EMJM scholarship-holders or not) consisting of a minimum of two study periods in two countries, of which at least one must be a EU Member State or third country associated to the Programme. These two countries must be different from the country of residence of the student at enrolment stage. Each of the two mandatory study periods must correspond to a workload of at least one academic semester (30 ECTS credits or equivalent).

All Master programme study periods must take place in full partner HEIs, or under their direct supervision.

Compulsory mobility periods cannot be replaced by virtual mobility (distance learning).

Duration of project (and activity, when applicable)

The consortium will receive a grant agreement for a duration of 74 months to finance at least four editions of the Master programme, each lasting 1 to 2 academic years (60, 90, or 120 ECTS credits).

Previously funded Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees (EMJMDs) and Joint Masters (EMJMs) can only apply for renewal at the earliest the year before the contract ends. In no circumstance can two editions of a Master funded by two different grant agreements start in the same academic year.

The scholarship is awarded for full-time enrolment, and will cover the entire duration of the Master programme (i.e. 12, 18, 24 months). A reduced duration of the scholarship is

applicable in case of recognition of prior learning (with a minimum scholarship duration of one academic year).

The first generation of enrolled students should not start studying later than the academic year following the year of project selection.

Applications are issued to the European Education and Culture Executive Agency, Call ID: ERASMUS-EDU-2022-PEX-EMJM-MOB. Applicant organisations will be assessed against the relevant exclusion and selection criteria.

Setting up a project

EMJMs are expected to fulfil the following requirements:

1. Include a jointly designed and fully integrated curriculum adhering to the Standards for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) applicable on the date of the EMJM application. These standards cover all the key aspects of joint programmes, in terms of joint design, implementation, delivery and quality assurance.

Beyond the Standards for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes, EMJMs put the emphasis on the following joint/common implementation procedures:

- Joint student admission requirements and application, selection, fee policy, monitoring, examination/performance evaluation rules/procedures;
 - Joint programme design and integrated teaching/training activities including a jointly agreed language policy and a joint process for recognition of study periods within the consortium;
 - Common services offered to students (e.g., language courses, visa support);
 - Joint promotion and awareness-raising activities in order to ensure worldwide visibility of the programme as well as of the Erasmus Mundus scholarship scheme. The promotional strategy should include an integrated and comprehensive specific website (in English, as well as in the main teaching language(s) if different) providing all the necessary information about the programme for students and other relevant stakeholders such as future employers;
 - Joint administrative and financial management by the consortium;
 - Joint degrees are encouraged, if national legislation allows.
2. Be delivered by a consortium of HEIs and, where relevant other educational and/or non-educational partners, established in an EU Member State or third country associated to the Programme or third country not associated to the Programme. The consortium must involve at least three HEIs from three different countries, of which at least two must be EU Member States and third countries associated to the Programme. All full partner HEIs (from EU Member States or third countries associated to the Programme or third countries not associated to the Programme) must be Master level degree-awarding institutions and award either a joint or a multiple degree attesting the

successful completion of the EMJM programme to the students fulfilling the degree requirements.

The necessary institutional commitment of all the organisations participating in the EMJM consortium must be ensured prior to the enrolment of the first EMJM students in order to guarantee solid institutional embedding and backing. This commitment takes the form of an EMJM Partnership Agreement, which must be signed by all partner institutions (including associated partners if deemed relevant). Participating HEIs from third countries not associated to the Programme should commit to the principles of the ECHE in this Partnership Agreement. This EMJM Partnership Agreement will have to cover all academic, operational, administrative and financial aspects related to the implementation of the EMJM and the management of the EMJM scholarships (see below). A draft Partnership Agreement is provided at application stage.

3. Enrol excellent students worldwide. The selection, recruitment and monitoring of individual students fall under the sole responsibility of the EMJM consortium. Student selection must be organised transparently, impartially and equitably. Among these students, a number may benefit from an EMJM scholarship.

In order to guarantee full transparency, and to define the rights and responsibilities of all enrolled students, both parties (i.e., enrolled students and EMJM consortium) must sign a Student Agreement upon student enrolment in the programme. The Student Agreement template must be published on the EMJM's website.

4. Include compulsory physical mobility for all enrolled students: The mobility tracks and the mechanism for recognition of study periods among the partner institutions must have been agreed within the consortium at project application stage.
5. Promote the exchange of staff and invited scholars to contribute to teaching, training, research and administrative activities.
6. The successful completion of the joint EMJM programme must lead to the award of either a joint degree (i.e. one single diploma awarded by at least two HEIs from different countries, of which at least one must be an EU Member State or third country associated to the Programme), or multiple degrees (i.e. at least two diplomas awarded by two higher education institutions from different countries, of which at least one must be a EU Member State or third country associated to the Programme), or a combination.

The degree(s) awarded to graduates must belong to the higher education degree systems of the countries in which the HEIs are based. The degree(s) must be mutually recognised by all the awarding full partner HEIs. Consortia should provide students with a joint Diploma Supplement at the end of their studies, covering the entire content of the Master programme.

At application stage, EMJM proposals must present fully developed joint study programmes, ready to run and to be advertised worldwide immediately after their selection. There is no limitation in terms of disciplines.

Beside the financial contribution to run joint Master programmes (see below section on funding rules), any EM funded projects ending in the period 2021-2027 (including those that started during 2014-2020 period) may continue to run the course as Erasmus Mundus master for up to three additional editions after the end of the action, provided that the assessment of the grant agreements performed by EACEA at final reporting stage will result in a score of 75 or more. The concerned masters should commit to (i) continue respecting the objectives, scope, expected impact of the action, (ii) engage to ensure continuity with the previously funded Master programme and (iii) provide an activity report at the end of the period concerned.

Expected impact

At system level

- Foster academic cooperation within the EHEA and beyond by supporting joint teaching and qualifications, quality improvements, promotion of academic excellence;
- Enhance the international dimension of higher education through cooperation between institutions in Europe and abroad, and through mobility for the best students worldwide;
- Increase the synergies between higher education, innovation and research;
- Remove barriers to learning, improving access to high quality and innovation-driven education and making it easier for learners to move between countries;
- Respond to societal and labour market needs;
- Contribute to the development of innovative education policies.

At institutional level

- Provide European and non-European HEIs with more opportunities for structured and sustainable academic cooperation worldwide;
- Improve the quality of programmes at Master level and supervision arrangements;
- Increase the internationalisation and competitiveness of participating organisations;
- Support the creation of new networks and enhance the quality of existing ones;
- Increase the attractiveness of the participating organisation(s) towards talented students;
- Contribute to the internationalisation policies of HEIs by developing international awareness through their curricula and the design of comprehensive internationalisation strategies (institutional cooperation and cross-border mobility of people).

At individual level

- Improve the employability of participating students,
- Improve key competences and skills of students;
- Forge new mind-sets and approaches to academic studies through international, interdisciplinary, intersectoral and intercultural experience;
- Enhance networking and communication capacities of the students;
- Increase the individual contribution to the knowledge-based economy and society.

Award criteria

Relevance of the project (maximum score 30 points)

Background and general objectives

- Overall aims and general objectives of the project and their relevance in relation to the EMJM;

Needs analysis and specific objectives

- Project rationale and needs analysis on which the proposal is built;
- Issues/challenges/gaps and specific objectives that the project aims to address in academic terms, and with regard to societal and labour market needs.

Complementarity with other actions and innovation

- Strategy to foster excellence and innovation;
- Support to the modernisation and internationalisation strategy of the partner HEIs;
- Project uniqueness and added value when compared with the existing offer of master programmes;
- Strategy to increase the attractiveness, integration, internationalisation, and contribute to the policy objectives of the European Higher Education Area.

Quality of the project design and implementation (maximum score 30 points)

Concept and methodology

- Jointness/integration of the EMJM taking into account the requirements described under the section 'Setting up a project'. In particular, the proposal describes:
 - The academic programme and how excellence and innovative elements in the learning experience will be ensured across the consortium;
 - The organisation of study periods including the minimum mobility requirements and the mutual recognition of the learning outcomes/credits;
 - The principles and requirements for student application, selection, participation in the course, and student scholarship allocation;
 - The services offered to students;
 - The contribution of mobile staff and invited scholars to teaching, training, research and administrative activities;
 - The specific support measures for facilitating equal and inclusive access to participants, and the enrolment of students/staff/invited scholars with individual needs linked to long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments.

Quality assurance, monitoring and evaluation strategy

- The internal and external quality assurance measures of the master programme;
- Extent to which the jointly designed and fully integrated curriculum adheres to the Standards for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes in the European Higher Education Area;
- The joint degree/the degrees to be delivered and its/their recognition by the awarding full partner HEIs, as well as the joint diploma supplement.

Project teams, staff and experts

- Project teams and how they will work together to implement the project.

Cost effectiveness and financial management

- Management of EU funding, mobilisation of complementary funding, and budget plan.

Risk management

- Identification of risks in the project implementation, and planning of adequate mitigating measures.

Quality of the partnership and the cooperation arrangements (maximum score 20 points)

Consortium setup

- Rationale for the consortium composition and complementarities of the partners; their added value for the EMJM implementation and how each partner draws benefit from its participation in the project.
- Innovative character of the consortium and inclusion of partners with different levels of experience with the Erasmus Mundus action. If applicable:
 - how the existing Erasmus Mundus consortium has been enhanced
 - how the cooperation with non-educational actors is organised and for which purpose.
- Definition of roles and tasks of each partner, and level of involvement in project activities

Consortium management and decision-making

- Cooperation arrangements, governing bodies and management tools in particular concerning the administrative and financial management;
- Institutional commitment of the partner institutions for the implementation of the EMJM;
- Adequacy of the draft Partnership Agreement for an effective management of the EMJM.

Impact (maximum score 20 points)

Impact and ambition

- Impact at system level (in and outside the academia, including general public and society), institutional level (partner organisations), and individual level (with particular emphasis on employability);
- Projections in terms of number of enrolled students within the timeframe of the project. Measures to ensure country balance in the recruitment of students.

Communication, dissemination and visibility

- Promotion strategy in order to attract excellent students worldwide: target groups, tasks of the partners, and how students will be encouraged to contribute to the Erasmus+ identity/community;
- Dissemination, exploitation and visibility strategy.

Sustainability and continuation

- Mid/long-term development and sustainability strategy beyond the EU funding period, including the mobilisation of other funding sources;

- Synergies/complementary with other (EU and non-EU funded) activities that can build on the project results

To be considered for funding, proposals must score at least **70 points**. Furthermore, they must score at least 22 points for the award criterion "Relevance of the project". In ex aequo cases, priority will be given to highest scores for "relevance of the project" and then, "impact".

What are the funding rules?

The EMJM grant is calculated on the basis of the following three components:

- a contribution to the institutional costs for the implementation of the programme;
- a maximum number of student scholarships to be awarded throughout the duration of the agreement.
- a top-up intended to cover individual needs of students with disabilities

Contribution to the institutional costs of the EMJM

This takes the form of a unit cost per enrolled student and is intended to cover part of the costs linked to the implementation of the EMJM programme.

The unit costs includes staff costs (teaching, travel), invited guest lecturers, promotion, dissemination, organisational costs (including full insurance coverage for the enrolled students, financial support to enrolled students with individual needs in case they are not covered by the top-up mechanism (see below), assistance with accommodation, and other student services), administrative costs, and all other costs necessary to implement a successful Master programme.

Selected projects cannot charge student application fees. Moreover, projects cannot charge tuition fees or other mandatory costs related to student participation in the course to Erasmus Mundus scholarship holders. The maximum contribution to the institutional costs is: **750 Euros/month x DR x NRES**

Where:

- **DR** = max. duration in months of the Master programme (i.e. 12, 18, 24 months)
- **NRES** = number of enrolled students (scholarship and non-scholarship holders) foreseen for the entire duration of the grant agreement.

Note that for the calculation of the grant, NRES will be capped at 100 (excluding top up scholarships for targeted regions of the world, if applicable).

Student scholarships

The scholarship will be a contribution to the costs incurred by the beneficiary students and shall cover travel, visa, installation and subsistence costs. It is calculated on the basis of a monthly unit cost for the entire period needed by the enrolled scholarship holder to complete the study programme (pro-rata of the actual number of days). This period covers study, research, placement activities, thesis preparation and defence, in line with the requirement of the joint Master. During this period, the scholarship can only be awarded in full, and to full-time students.

Calculation of the maximum scholarship per student:

The scholarship is calculated as: **1 400 Euros/month x DS**

Where **DS** = duration of the Master programme.

Calculation of the maximum EMJM scholarship amount for the duration of the grant agreement:

The maximum scholarship amount is calculated as: **1 400 Euros/month x DR x NRS** Where:

- **DR** = max. duration in months of the Master programme (i.e. 12, 18, 24 months)
- **NRS** = number of scholarships foreseen for the entire duration of the grant agreement (maximum 60, excluding top up scholarships for targeted regions of the world, if applicable)

Contribution to individual needs of students with disabilities

Contribution for individual needs are eligible if they fulfil the general eligibility conditions set in the grant agreement. They will be used for enrolled students (with or without scholarship) with disabilities (e.g. long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments), such as those related to the acquisition of special items or services (e.g. assistance by third persons, adaptation of work environment, additional travel/transportation costs). The support to cover such individual needs of enrolled students, will take the form of the following special needs unit costs:

(a) EUR 3 000 (b) EUR 4 500 (c) EUR 6 000 (d) EUR 9 500 (e) EUR 13 000 (f) EUR 18 500 (g) EUR 27 500 (h) EUR 35 500 (i) EUR 47 500 (j) EUR 60 000

Calculation of the unit cost contribution per student:

Enrolled students will declare what type of items/services are needed and their cost. The applicable unit cost will be identified as the rate corresponding to or immediately lower than the estimated expenses. This unit cost is a contribution, and is not intended to fully cover the actual costs.

NB: costs below the lowest rate (i.e. less than EUR 3 000) will not be eligible for additional support and will have to be covered by the contribution to the institutional costs of the EMJM or by other funding sources of the beneficiary institutions.

Calculation of the maximum contribution allocated to the EMJM for the duration of the grant agreement:

At application stage, based on their estimation, applicants will request a maximum of two unit costs, corresponding to the highest unit costs available, i.e. max 2 x EUR 60 000. This amount will be used to allocate the unit costs to the concerned students.

At implementation stage, the unit costs will take the form of a monthly unit contribution, calculated as follows:

{special needs unit x (1/number of months)}

The number of months in the formula above shall correspond to the number of months the special needs items or services were used or produced for implementing the action, depending on the nature of the items or services. For one-off costs, the number of months shall correspond to 1.

Additional funds for students from targeted regions of the world

The applicants may apply for additional funds for students from third countries not associated to the Programme from the following regions: **Regions 1, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11** financed by the EU's external action instruments.

EMJMs proposed for funding may receive up to 27 additional scholarships (including the corresponding institutional costs) funded by the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation – Global Europe Instrument (NDICI), and up to 3 additional scholarships (including the corresponding institutional costs) funded by the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA III) for the entire duration of the Master course. These additional scholarships are offered to respond to the external action priorities of the EU with regard to higher education and take into consideration the different levels of economic and social development in the relevant third countries not associated to the Programme. These scholarships will be allocated to the EMJMs selected for funding according to their ranking in descending order, and taking into account the available budget.

Further information on the amounts available under each budgetary envelope will be published on the Funding and Tender Opportunities Portal (FTOP). The funds will have to be used in a geographically balanced way and institutions are encouraged to recruit students in the poorest and least developed third countries not associated to the Programme.

The geographical targets and indicative budget share set for this action are the following:

- Region 1 (Western Balkans) : Particular focus will be on scholarships in the fields of climate change, environment and energy, digital technologies, engineering, sustainable growth and jobs
- Region 3 (Neighbourhood South): 8% of the budget available from NDICI.
- Region 5 (Asia): 23% of the budget available from NDICI. Priority will be given to least developed countries.
- Region 6 (Central Asia): 9% of the budget available from NDICI. Priority will be given to least developed countries.
- Region 7 (Middle East): 3% of the budget available from NDICI. Priority will be given to least developed countries.
- Region 8 (Pacific): 1% of the budget available from NDICI. Priority will be given to least developed countries.
- Region 9 (Sub-Saharan Africa): 31% of the budget available from NDICI. Priority will be given to least developed countries. A special emphasis shall also be put on migration priority countries. No country may access more than 8% of funding foreseen for the Region.
- Region 10 (Latin America): 24% of the budget available from NDICI. Maximum of 30% to Brazil and Mexico together.
- Region 11 (Caribbean): 1% of the budget available from NDICI.

The regional target budgets and priorities apply indicatively at project level and will be monitored at implementation stage.

Calculation of the final grant

The final grant will be calculated at final reporting stage on the basis of the number of scholarships awarded, the number of students enrolled and the actual number of unit costs allocated for individual needs, provided that the total amount does not exceed the maximum grant awarded. Projects will have flexibility to transfer funds between scholarships (excluding top up scholarships for targeted regions of the world, if applicable) and individual needs depending on the real needs and in accordance with the grant agreement. Transfers between budget headings and between funding instruments are not allowed.

More details are described in the model Grant Agreement available in the Funding and Tender Opportunities Portal (FTOP).

Other funding opportunities:

- Erasmus Intensive Programme: provides support for short study programmes (at least ten days + any preparations/ follow-up) that bring together students and teachers from higher education institutions. Can also be relevant as funding for activities that form part of the joint degree collaboration. For further information, see: <https://esdp-network.net/intensive-programme-general-information>.

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