

**GUIDE TO  
DEVELOPING  
AND RUNNING  
JOINT  
PROGRAMMES  
AT BACHELOR  
AND MASTER'S  
LEVEL  
- A template**

Joint programmes are a rather new phenomenon for most European universities. The joint implementation of study programmes contributes to their attractiveness. However, this kind of collaboration also brings important strategic, pedagogic, and practical challenges, particularly when legislative and educational structures differ. The work is demanding and time-consuming and there is need for support in order to be able to create programmes that are well-integrated and of highest quality.

This guide provides information and describes procedures relating to different stages of the work on joint programmes at Bachelor and Master level. Most of the information is relevant to both national and international joint programmes, while some information relates specifically to international programmes. The guide is intended for academic and administrative staff working with or planning to work with joint degrees.

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# 1. GENERAL INFORMATION

## 1.1 INTERNATIONAL FRAMEWORK

Joint programmes have been more or less on the agenda since the Bologna process started in 1999. The following Bologna documents refer directly to joint degrees:

'TOWARDS THE EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA', Communiqué of the meeting of European Ministers in charge of Higher Education in Prague on 19 May 2001:

### **Promotion of the European dimensions in higher education**

In order to further strengthen the important European dimensions of higher education and graduate employability Ministers called upon the higher education sector to increase the development of modules, courses and curricula at all levels with "European" content, orientation or organisation. This concerns particularly modules, courses and degree curricula offered in partnership by institutions from different countries and leading to a recognized joint degree.

In order to take the process further, Ministers encouraged the follow-up group to arrange seminars to explore the following areas: cooperation concerning accreditation and quality assurance, recognition issues and the use of credits in the Bologna process, the development of joint degrees ...

'Realising the European Higher Education Area', *Communiqué of the Conference of Ministers responsible for Higher Education in Berlin on 19 September 2003:*

### **Promotion of the European dimension in higher education**

Ministers note that, following their call in Prague, additional modules, courses and curricula with European content, orientation or organisation are being developed.

They note that initiatives have been taken by Higher Education Institutions in various European countries to pool their academic resources and cultural traditions in order to promote the development of integrated study programmes<sup>1</sup> and joint degrees at first, second and third level.

Moreover, they stress the necessity of ensuring a substantial period of study abroad in joint degree programmes as well as proper provision for linguistic diversity and language learning, so that students may achieve their full potential for European identity, citizenship and employability.

Ministers agree to engage at the national level to remove legal obstacles to the establishment and recognition of such degrees and to actively support the development and adequate quality assurance of integrated curricula leading to joint degrees.

'The European Higher Education Area - Achieving the Goals', *Communiqué of the Conference of European Ministers Responsible for Higher Education, Bergen, 19-20 May 2005:*

We express support for the subsidiary texts to the Lisbon Recognition Convention and call upon all national authorities and other stakeholders to recognise joint degrees awarded in two or more countries in the EHEA.

In particular, we shall look for progress in:

- the awarding and recognition of joint degrees, including at the doctorate level;...

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<sup>1</sup> In this context 'integrated study programmes' refers to joint study programmes.

'Towards the European Higher Education Area: responding to challenges in a globalised world', *Conference of European Ministers Responsible for Higher Education, London, 17-18 May 2007*:

At national level, we will work to implement fully the agreed recognition tools and procedures and consider ways of further incentivising mobility for both staff and students. This includes encouraging a significant increase in the number of joint programmes and the creation of flexible curricula, as well as urging our institutions to take greater responsibility for staff and student mobility, more equitably balanced between countries across the EHEA.

## **1.2 CENTRAL CONCEPTS AND DEFINITIONS**

### **1.2.1 JOINT STUDY PROGRAMME**

There are several alternative definitions/models of joint study programmes:

1. A joint study programme refers to situations where two or more institutions collaborate on a joint study programme, but where each institution is responsible for admission and awarding of degrees to its own students. The programme is developed and managed jointly, but each institution "owns" its own students.
2. A joint study programme refers to situations when two or more institutions cooperate on a joint study programme that leads to a degree at one of the partner institutions.

Two or more institutions collaborate on a study programme leading up to a degree at one of the institutions. One institution is responsible for the degree and issues the degree diploma. This institution has academic responsibility for the contents of the study programme. The course descriptions must be approved by the institution that issues the degree, and this institution is responsible for assessing the basis for the diploma in relation to the descriptions of learning outcome in the programme description. The institution issuing the diploma is responsible for academic approval of the course and for the quality of the programme.<sup>2</sup>

While collaboration on a joint study programme is less of a commitment than a joint degree, many of the same academic, administrative and practical challenges must be discussed and solved by the partner institutions.

### **1.2.2 JOINT DEGREES**

A joint degree refers to a collaboration between two or more institutions on a joint study programme leading to a joint degree. This means that all partner institutions are responsible for the entire programme and not just their own separate parts. A joint degree can be documented by issuing a joint diploma, a joint diploma plus two or more institutional diplomas, or two or more institutional diplomas. This is in line with the definition in the Lisboa Convention.

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<sup>2</sup> [http://www.uhr.no/documents/En\\_h\\_ndbok\\_for\\_fellegradssamarbeid\\_rev\\_2009\\_\\_2\\_.pdf](http://www.uhr.no/documents/En_h_ndbok_for_fellegradssamarbeid_rev_2009__2_.pdf)

*Lisboa Convention:*

A joint degree should be understood as referring to a higher education qualification issued jointly by at least two or more higher education institutions on the basis of a joint study programme.

A joint degree may be issued as

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

The Erasmus Mundus programme uses a more narrow definition of what constitutes a joint degree:

A double or multiple degree is defined as two or more nationally recognised diplomas issued officially by two or more institutions involved in an integrated study programme. A joint degree is defined as a single diploma issued by at least two of the institutions offering an integrated study programme.

### 1.2.3 COTUTELLE / JOINT PHD DEGREE

A cotutelle is an individual contract for joint academic supervision at PhD level that regulates the partners' responsibilities, also with regard to evaluation and defence of doctoral theses.

A cotutelle agreement is individual. A personal agreement for each PhD candidate will always be required. Additional institutional agreements, national agreements or framework agreements on cotutelle can still be formulated, referring to general procedures and systems. Quality assurance, admission, assessment and diplomas are aspects such agreements could naturally cover.<sup>3</sup>

A joint PhD degree must contain joint supervision, but it can also entail collaboration on joint research training. In the Erasmus Mundus II programme, it is possible to apply for joint PhD programmes.

## 1.3 ADDED VALUE OF JOINT PROGRAMMES

Establishing joint programmes consists of far more than entering into a contract. It involves developing a new study programme and a new arena for knowledge. The prime objective of establishing joint programmes should be to improve the quality of the education and research the degree encompasses. The result of two or more institutions joining forces to offer a study programme should be a programme of a higher academic standard than the institutions would achieve separately. In other words, joint programmes can lead to the following added values:

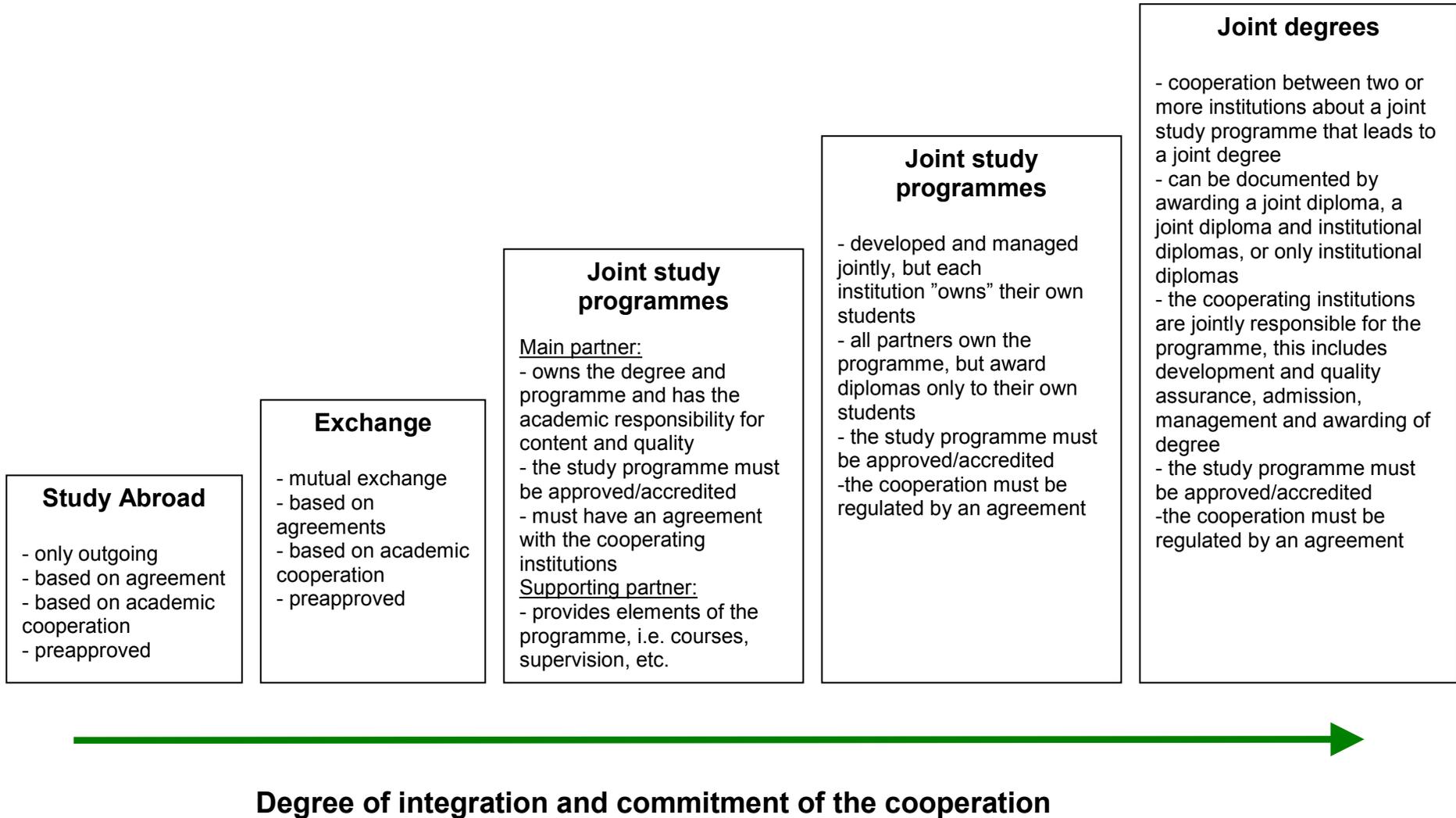
- Increase internationalisation at the institutions
- Stimulate multinational collaboration on teaching at a high level and make cooperation binding
- Increase transparency between educational systems
- Develop study and research alternatives in accordance with emerging needs
- Improve educational and research collaboration
- Offer students an expanded and innovative arena for learning

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<sup>3</sup> [http://www.uhr.no/documents/En\\_h\\_ndbok\\_for\\_fellegradssamarbeid\\_rev\\_2009\\_\\_2\\_.pdf](http://www.uhr.no/documents/En_h_ndbok_for_fellegradssamarbeid_rev_2009__2_.pdf)

- Increase highly educated candidates' employability and motivation for mobility in a global labour market
- Increase non-European students' interest in the educational programme
- Increase competence at partner institutions through cooperation and implementation of a best practice system
- Increase the institution's ability to change in step with emerging needs
- Contribute to tearing down cultural barriers, both personal and institutional

**Figure 1: International educational cooperation**



## 2. ASSESSMENT STAGE

### 2.1 GOOD ADVICE AND IMPORTANT FACTORS WHEN PLANNING JOINT PROGRAMMES

The following advice is based on the *European University Association's* (EUA) 'Golden rules for new joint Masters Programmes' from the rapport 'Developing Joint Masters Programmes for Europe' (<http://www.eua.be/index.php?id=62>).

- **Know why you wish to set up a joint study programme.** What makes it unique? What distinguishes the programme from existing programmes? What is the anticipated value-added in relation to existing programmes/courses/modules? Joint programme collaboration should result in the development of a study programme that is unique and of high academic quality. It should be a programme that the institutions could not offer on their own.
- **Choose partners with the utmost care.** It is an advantage if the academic communities that want to establish a joint programme already have a good working relationship. Key factors in the choice of partners are familiarity with the partners (knowledge of their academic strengths), resources, reliability (both formal accreditation and reputation), and determination to carry out the programme. It is important to not only include academic considerations but also the administrative capacity of the potential partners. The more partners, the harder it may be to coordinate collaboration. For the Erasmus Mundus programme, at least three European partners are required, in addition to prospective partners from other continents. Does a specific collaboration have the potential to expand to other academic communities at the institutions (synergy effect) and is there any interest in such expansion?
- **Ensure that the proposed collaboration has a firm academic and administrative foundation at all levels in the institution.**
- **Establish the partners' responsibilities and make sure that sufficient academic and administrative resources are available, both at your own institution and at partner institutions.** It is an advantage to know the national and local laws and regulations relating to joint programmes/degrees concerning all partners. At this stage, the partners should also clarify who is to lead the consortium.
- **Carry out a resource assessment.** Financial aspects should be part of the agreement between the collaborating institutions. Funds should be set aside for meetings during the planning stage.
- **Plan and organise sufficient meeting points in advance.** Planning a joint programme has to be done properly and it takes time. Regular meetings, telephone conferences and the like should also take place when the joint degree is up and running, both for academic staff and administrators. Regular meetings contribute to trust, fellowship, commitment and good partnership across institutional and national borders.
- **Discuss objectives for the programme and expected learning outcomes.**
- **Develop a plan for recruitment and marketing.**

- **Be in dialogue and be flexible at all involved institutions.**

## **2.2 RECOMMENDED CRITERIA FOR ASSESSING WHETHER OR NOT TO ENTER INTO A JOINT PROGRAMME COLLABORATION**

The following criteria should be considered when assessing whether or not the university should enter into joint degree collaboration:

- Joint programmes should be relevant to society and working life.
- Joint programmes should be in accordance with the strategic and academic priorities of the university and its academic communities.
- Joint programmes should be within an academic field where the university has relevant competence.
- Joint programmes should stimulate increased student mobility, also amongst the university's own students.
- Joint programmes should stimulate increased transparency between the academic communities and increase competence through reciprocal learning outcomes.
- Joint programmes should strengthen research-based teaching.
- Joint programmes should strengthen collaboration on research and development projects.
- Joint programmes should include teacher mobility.
- Joint programmes should be supported by the academic community and by the institution.
- Academic, administrative and economic resources must be available.

## **2.3 CHECKLIST FOR THE ASSESSMENT STAGE**

- Know why you are developing the study programme
- Choose your partners with the utmost care
- Ensure academic and administrative support
- Meet to discuss challenges
- Divide responsibility
- Secure financial resources
- Plan sufficient meeting points
- Develop well-defined objectives for the programme
- Address recruitment and marketing
- Use the recommended criteria for assessing whether or not to enter into collaboration

### 3. DEVELOPMENT STAGE

#### 3.1 WHAT TO DO DURING THE DEVELOPMENT STAGE

- The department should **name local representatives** to the consortium.
- The partner institutions should sign a **Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)**, which affirms the partners' intention to develop a joint degree. An application for financial support can function as a MoU.
- It must be **ensured that the partner institutions are accredited institutions** within their national systems.
- **Financial and administrative consequences and strains should be clarified** by the faculty, department and consortium as early as possible. The cost estimate should include both development and operating costs. What incomes and outcomes one can expect, and how these should be divided, must be discussed.
- If the partner institutions wish to charge **tuition fees**, one should discuss whether all students should pay the same amount or whether to differentiate between European and non-European students.
- Take into account the **national regulations** of each partner. These regulations/statutes largely decide what is formally possible. It is of utmost importance to obtain support for the process at all the participating institutions and to discuss difficulties that may arise in the agreement process or during the actual implementation of the programme from the early stages of the collaboration.

#### 3.2 ELEMENTS THAT MUST BE DISCUSSED DURING THE DEVELOPMENT STAGE

During the development stage the department must, first of all, name local representatives to the consortium. Next, it is especially important to secure approval/accreditation of the study programme at all partner institutions and get an agreement signed by all partner institutions regarding the running of the joint degree. In this process, the department should clarify the following (this also has to be clarified before sending an application for external financial support):

##### 3.2.1 STUDY PLAN

1. **Scope of the Master's degree.** National regulations may set standards for the length of the degree (60-120 ECTS) and it is important to know each partner's limitations.
2. **Scope of the independent work.** National regulations may set standards for the length of the thesis and it is important to know each partner's limitations.
3. **Scope of the courses,** and adjustment of the study programme to the different institutions' semester periods. It is important to take into account how the different semester periods might affect the students, for example with respect to student grant or loan requirements. You also need to decide on the **language of instruction**. Are there any policies or support for teaching and studies in another language at the partner universities? Is it necessary to have an introduction course in the "local" language? It is also important to look at the English entry

requirements at each university. One should have a common policy regarding exemptions from the English entry requirements, in case such requests are made from applicants.

4. **Discussions of evaluation and teaching methods.** Issues related to teaching, deciding grades, technical errors in connection with exams and the like are the responsibility of the institution with academic responsibility for the module. It is that institution's regulations for exams and appeals that shall apply. Appeals about grading or technical errors in connection with exams will be the responsibility of the respective authority in the country responsible for examination coordination. It is likely that the collaborating institutions use different grading systems. It is desirable that the grades are stated in both the original system and converted to the ECTS system<sup>4</sup>. This means that the grading systems must be described in detail in the Diploma Supplement (DS) section 8. The collaborating institutions must consider whether to issue a separate DS for each institution or whether a joint DS should be prepared. It is important to provide the students with detailed information about any differences in grading and assessment.
5. Where are the **students going to spend the different semesters?** There are endless variations on how to run a joint programme. You can have internet-based modules or have students move together as a group between the partner universities. You can also offer different courses at the universities that students can apply to as optional in their own individual study plan and have credits transferred to the home university.
6. A joint programme should include **mobility of both staff and students**. There are different ways to coordinate this mobility. Should you have teachers/teaching teams from all partner universities, teaching continuously on the programme for the entire duration or only during the study period their own university is in charge of the students? Should student mobility be organised through a fixed or an optional system?
7. Elements of the programme description:
  - a) Name of the degree (in the case of a joint degree: if several national diplomas are issued, the degree may have different names) and name of the study programme
  - b) Learning objectives
  - c) The programmes' relevance (to society, work etc.)
  - d) Content, language of instruction
  - e) Expected learning outcome on completion of the programme (knowledge, skills and general competence) and qualifications
  - f) The academic structure of the study programme (courses/modules, study progress, specialisation if relevant)
  - g) Admission requirements and requirements for study progress
  - h) Compulsory requirements for the study programme (for example, the Master's thesis)
  - i) ECTS credits and students' workload
  - j) Teaching methods/pedagogy and syllabus
  - k) Assessments and the grading scales used at the respective partner institutions
  - l) Evaluation of the study programme

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<sup>4</sup> This is in accordance with the recommendations of the European Commission: *The performance of the student is documented by a local/national grade. It is good practice to add an ECTS grade, in particular in case of credit transfer. The ECTS grading scale ranks the students on a statistical basis.*  
[http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/socrates/ects/index\\_en.html](http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/socrates/ects/index_en.html)

- m) Place of study for the different courses
- n) Mobility model (student and teacher mobility)
- o) Achieved competence in relation to further studies or work opportunities
- p) Contact information

The programme description must meet the standards in *Framework for Qualifications of European Higher Education Area* and the requirements of national qualification frameworks, if applicable.

### 3.2.2 CURRICULUM

The process of developing new programmes, formulating learning outcomes and designing courses starts well in advance of the actual introduction of the course.

#### *Learning outcomes*

Learning outcomes should always be worded carefully and in a way that is acceptable to all partner universities. When writing the intended learning outcomes, it is important to consider students' needs, the setup of assessment as well as employability after graduation.

#### *Programme design*

Joint programmes will use a blend of campus and net based teaching and the optimal proportions of the two should be considered. The programme should also integrate training of necessary skills, such as information literacy, academic method and conduct, etc.

### 3.2.3 TEACHING SUPPORT

The students will need learning and ICT support during their education. The partner universities are likely to use different Learning Management Systems, library systems and so on, and access and authentication for such systems must be managed. It is important to survey type and amount of support that students will have access to at the partner universities. Other areas for consideration are course literature, disciplinary standards, teaching materials and learning media and, not least, ownership of resources and intellectual property rights.

### 3.2.4 SUPPORT AT THE DEPARTMENT/FACULTY LEVEL

Support at the department/faculty level is crucial. What requirements does the faculty have when it comes to joint programmes? What kind of priorities does it have? Do they offer financial support? It is also important to involve all actors in the process – have a dialogue with the admissions office, study counsellors, and career counsellors.

### 3.2.5 ADMISSION PROCEDURES

1. When formulating joint admission criteria, the partner institutions must be aware that some institutions may have stricter laws and less flexibility. The admission criteria must be in accordance with each institution's ordinary requirements for admission to a Bachelor/Master's degree. Exemptions may be necessary in cases where it is necessary to adjust the study programme to fit all the participating institutions.

2. One should clarify which requirements regarding documentation, motivational letter (regarding the student's motivation for applying to the programme), references and, if relevant, (telephone) interview the cooperating institutions want to have.
3. The partner institutions must also agree on admission procedures and application deadlines. The deadline must take into account whether international students are to be recruited (which often calls for an early deadline) and/or European students (which often calls for a late deadline). In addition, limitations on the coordinator's part (workload, IT systems etc.) could influence the process.
4. Often, but not always, it is natural that the coordinating institution is responsible for the practical implementation of the admission process, while the decision regarding who shall be admitted is reached jointly by the academic staff (this does not necessarily mean that they have to meet in person). A common application form (preferably electronic) can be a useful tool.

### 3.2.6 ENROLLMENT AND OTHER ADMINISTRATIVE ASPECTS

Follow-up of students, rules for leaves of absence, procedures regarding lack of study progress, appeal procedures relating to admissions and the organisation of academic supervision etc. must be discussed. Who is responsible for receiving and processing applications for leaves of absence; is it the institution where the student is at the moment or is it the coordinating institution? A coordinating institution should be responsible for follow-up in cooperation with others. The different partners should be informed about the different institutional procedures, so that they can all recognise the procedures at the respective institutions. If possible, strategies, procedures and guidelines should be jointly formulated in order to ensure the best follow-up.

### 3.2.7 DEGREE REQUIREMENTS AND DIPLOMA

The type of diploma (joint and/or national) and the diploma design, the content of the Diploma Supplement; clarify any national restrictions relating to the issuing of diplomas. Which country's principles for diplomas will be used when joint diplomas are issued? To what extent should the laws and regulations referred to be indicated on the diploma? Are joint diplomas to be sent between institutions to be signed by hand? What happens if individual candidates do not meet the requirements for a joint degree, for example with respect to stays at all the institutions? It must also be clarified whether the individual universities require the student to stay at the institution in order for the name of the institution to be listed on the joint diploma.

## 3.3 THE AGREEMENT PROCESS

A written agreement is a mutual declaration where parties commit themselves to something, i.e. a mutual commitment to perform certain tasks that are carefully regulated in the contract. The contract lays down what is to be accomplished and the rights and obligations of each partner.

The cooperation agreement should be drawn up when applying for approval for the study programme. The agreement, together with the programme and course descriptions, constitutes the contractual relationship between the partner institutions and between the students and the institutions. The process of drawing up an agreement should be started in the development stage. It takes time for the cooperating institutions to agree on the text, and one should start the work as early as

possible. The agreement should be signed during the development stage or at the latest at the beginning of the management stage.

The content of the agreement:

The agreement shall regulate the partners' responsibilities and may contain the following points:

- Who is to function as coordinator, and whether an executive committee, a programme committee or any other kind of steering committee should be appointed. The committee's composition and mandate should be specified.
- The financial responsibilities of each partner institution.
- The structure of the programme (including its nominal length, aim/objective, language of instruction, student and teacher mobility).
- Responsibilities relating to the awarding of degrees and diploma design. Information about admission, registration and appeal policy and procedures.
- The students' financial responsibilities.
- Quality assurance.
- If relevant, Intellectual Property Rights.
- If the agreement is entered into before the study programme is formally approved by all partners, the agreement must contain a clause/proviso stating that the agreement is only valid if the joint degree is approved by all institutions.
- The date of entry into force and duration of the agreement and procedures related to amendments, renewal or termination.
- On which national laws the study programme and the consortium is to be based.

### **3.4 FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR DEVELOPMENT**

Joint programmes are far more demanding in terms of resources than ordinary study programmes. The costs of both planning and running joint programmes are substantial. Costs depend on whether or not one acts as coordinator, how many partner institutions are involved and access to external financing. Financial and administrative consequences should be clarified as early as possible. The cost estimate should include both development and operating costs.

There may also be institutional, national and regional programmes that provide financial support for the development phase. All partner institutions should inquire about possibilities for financial support.

Financial support for an Erasmus Mundus programme presupposes that the programme is 'fully developed at the time of the application and be ready to run for at least five consecutive editions as of the academic year following the application year'.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency: 'ERASMUS MUNDUS 2009 – 2013. Programme Guide', page 23 – [http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus\\_mundus/programme/programme\\_guide\\_en.php](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus_mundus/programme/programme_guide_en.php)

### **3.5 CHECKLIST FOR THE DEVELOPMENT STAGE**

- Draw up and sign a Memorandum of Understanding (if relevant)
- Ensure that the partner institutions are accredited
- Meet to discuss challenges
- If relevant, apply for financial development support
- Develop a study plan/programme description and discuss such elements as:
  - Scope of the degree, the independent work and the courses
  - Mobility
- Criteria for admission and admission procedures
- Registration with regard to admission (enrollment)
- Follow-up of the students
- Appeal procedures and grading system
- Diploma
- Information, marketing and recruitment
- Student arrival, housing and welfare
- Establishment/approval of the joint degree programme at all partner institutions
- Draw up and enter into a cooperation agreement

## **4. MANAGEMENT AND EVALUATION STAGE**

As far as possible, the practical organisation of the programme must have been discussed and agreed on in the development stage. 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. The partners 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 persons with academic and administrative responsibility 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.

EU has produced a handbook concerning the running of joint degrees based on "good practices" developed by six chosen Erasmus Mundus programmes.<sup>6</sup>

### **4.1 ADMISSION**

- It is recommended that admission be 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 are made jointly by the academic staff.
- 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.

### **4.2 ARRIVAL/INTRODUCTION AND HOUSING (INTERNATIONAL JOINT PROGRAMMES)**

To facilitate the process, you should have continuous contact with the admitted student from the time of selection/admission until the start of the programme (arrival). This is especially important if you have many applicants and students on the waiting list for vacancies. 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. Provide information to all admitted students, containing practical matters like for instance that they need to contact the Swedish embassy/consulate in their home country to start the application process for a residence permit. They also need to receive programme specific information (literature, schedules etc).

Information about housing services needs to be clearly communicated.

### **4.3 TEACHING AND CURRICULUM**

The successful implementation of joint programmes rests on careful planning in the early stages of the development process. However, it is not necessarily the teachers

implementing the joint programme who are the initiators, and so the course content as well as the teaching methods may develop or alter.

#### *Planning of courses and tuition, choice of teaching methods*

First of all the involved teachers 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, teachers 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.

#### *Course design*

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, passwords for LMS and library systems, etc.

#### *Course evaluation*

Plan for and carry out continuous evaluation during and summative evaluation after each course. Decide on measures for managing feedback to and from students and be sure to include student representatives in all planning meetings!

### **4.4 DIPLOMA AND DIPLOMA SUPPLEMENT**

If the procedures, design and content of the Diploma have not been clarified already, the partners should try to clarify most matters relating to the issuing of diplomas during the start-up phase. Regardless of the type of diploma that is issued by the partners, it must be stated on the Diploma and the Diploma Supplement that the degree is a joint degree. If the collaborating institutions choose to issue one diploma from each institution (double/multiple diplomas), the diplomas should include wording stating that the diplomas have been issued for the same joint degree and are only valid if presented together.

The parties must agree on the contents of the Diploma, but the minimum information should include the student's name on the front page of the Diploma (as written in his/her passport), the student's date of birth, the name of the issuing institution(s) and the degree that the student 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.

### **4.5 INFORMATION AND MARKETING**

- In connection with recruitment to joint programmes, the added value of this type of collaborative project should be clarified for potential applicants. Information about learning outcomes and *employability* that can be expected to strengthen

candidates' position on the job market after completion of the programme should be emphasised. It will also be an advantage to highlight any collaboration with the business community and public bodies in connection with recruitment.

- It will be an advantage if the partners agree on who is responsible for answering questions from potential applicants.

#### 4.6 QUALITY ASSURANCE

The following points are important to discuss when working to assure the quality of the study programme. Keywords are predictability and transparency. All involved parties should also be familiar with the ENQA (European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education) standards for quality assurance in higher education (<http://www.enqa.eu/>).<sup>7</sup> It is an advantage if the partner institutions adopt a plan for a quality assurance system before the programme starts.

- The partners should prepare their own (proposals for) course descriptions for the courses for which they are responsible. Each partner must assure the quality of the part that is included in the joint degree in the same way as for ordinary courses in accordance with relevant quality assurance requirements.
- Courses should be approved/recognised by all the partners according to a system decided by the partners.
- Quality assurance procedures for all joint processes (such as admission, diploma design) should be decided jointly.
- Each institution should be familiar with the other institutions' procedures for quality assurance of local processes.
- The study programme must be coherent. A system and procedures for regular evaluation of the programme as a whole and its constituent elements must be prepared jointly.
- The programme should be assessed both halfway through and on completion. It is important to get both the students' and teaching staff's views on the programme at an early stage, so that it is possible to make adjustments if necessary. Both the academic content and the administrative implementation of the programme must be evaluated.
- Who 'cancels' the joint degree if the evaluations uncover serious problems relating to the programme or the collaboration?
- The collaborating institutions should establish a governing body that is in charge of the development and quality assurance of the study programme. The institutions can choose the organisation model they themselves find most suitable. This means that the supreme body of the study programme can be a programme board, a steering committee or another type of arrangement. The body should consist of at least one representative from each collaborating institution. The form and mandate of the governing body should be clearly described in the agreement entered into by the parties.

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<sup>7</sup> The European University Association's (EUA) *Guidelines for Quality Enhancement in European Joint Master Programmes* (<http://www.eua.be/index.php?id=110>) is also a useful document.

#### **4.7 EVALUATION AND REPORTING**

- The partner institutions should have a system for evaluation and reporting. Such a system could generate an annual report from each partner institution in addition to a joint annual report prepared by the coordinating institution.
- The partner institutions should have a plan for quality assurance adopted before implementation of the programme.

#### **4.8 FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR IMPLEMENTATION/OPERATION**

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 important that the financial consequences and the need for administrative resources are clarified as early as possible.

#### **4.9 CHECKLIST FOR THE MANAGEMENT AND EVALUATION STAGE**

- Admission and enrollment
- Arrival and housing
- Diploma and Diploma Supplement
- Information and marketing
- Quality assurance

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<sup>8</sup> Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency: 'ERASMUS MUNDUS 2009-2013. Programme Guide', page 23 - [http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus\\_mundus/programme/programme\\_guide\\_en.php](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus_mundus/programme/programme_guide_en.php)

- Evaluation and reporting
- If relevant, apply for financial support

## 5. TERMINATION OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME

There may be several reasons why a joint programme is terminated or why one institution withdraws from such a collaboration. A well-functioning quality assurance system will uncover problems and enable continuous improvement, and thereby prevent termination. Theoretically, such a system may also uncover problems that are so serious that termination must be considered. In such cases, the partners should discuss the problems and find solutions that are acceptable to all the partners. There may also be other reasons why terminating the program or a partner's withdrawal has to be considered. There could, for example, be insufficient recruitment, deficient finances or unforeseen national circumstances.

Irrespective of the cause(s), efforts should be made to ensure that termination or withdrawal takes place in a predictable and orderly manner. The students already admitted to the programme are the first priority.

- In the agreement between the partners, each institution's responsibilities with regard to withdrawal should be clarified, including how far in advance one must notify (in writing) the partners about a decision to withdraw.
- The agreement should also clarify what responsibilities each institution has towards the students admitted to the programme if it chooses to withdraw from the programme.

### Proposals for the agreement text:

Any cooperating university may withdraw from this agreement, giving six months' written notice to the other institutions. However, students who have commenced their studies at any of the cooperating universities on the date of termination are entitled to complete their courses of study and the programme at all institutions.

If all the cooperating institutions agree to terminate the joint study programme, all the cooperating institutions have to make arrangements for all students who have commenced their studies to complete their courses of study and the programme in a satisfactory manner.

**Figure 2. Stages of development and management of joint degrees and joint study programmes**

