



D2.3 – Report on barriers in applying the criteria in current joint programmes

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Work Package 2 - Mapping and Screening of existing joint programmes

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CHAPTER 1: SUMMARY

This deliverable is part of the European Degree Label Institutional Laboratory (EDLab) project, approved under the European policy experimentation in higher education call ERASMUS-EDU-2022-POL-EXP-HE. It includes a qualitative analysis of the screening, sustainability of the criteria and identification of barriers and recommendations for ensuring its possible implementation in the future.

This report draws on information obtained from several sources, including a series of focus groups and in-depth interviews with stakeholders; the second EDLab workshop held on 11-12th January 2024 and the results of the three surveys carried out within the framework of the EDLab project and reported in D2.1 and D2.2.

Some general considerations have been adopted by the EDLab project team on key aspects related to the European degree label. These considerations have shaped the decisions taken regarding our recommendations for the criteria and the initial version of the accompanying guidelines that has been developed.

This is accompanied by a glossary of terms which, during the work carried out in WP2, have been misunderstood, interpreted in different ways by different people, or refer to procedures or entities that are unfamiliar to some stakeholders.

Finally, some considerations are offered with regard to the existing barriers to applying the criteria to joint programmes.

CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY

This report draws on information obtained from several sources, including a series of focus groups and in-depth interviews held with stakeholders, the II EDLab workshop and the results of the three surveys carried out within the framework of the EDLab project and reported in D2.1 and D2.2 .

A series of in-depth interviews and focus groups were carried out by the 13 partner HEIs in the EDLab project between 15th September and 30th November 2023. The target group for interviewees included joint programme coordinators, students and alumni, and senior management within the consortium institutions and beyond (QAAs, national authorities, associated partner universities). Each partner HEI was responsible for selecting participants and organising the related interviews and focus groups, while the Ministries and QAAs were approached by the coordinating partner university at national level for the four EDLab target countries (University of Granada – Spain; Nova University Lisbon – Portugal; University of Padua – Italy and Claude Bernard Lyon 1 University - France).

The purpose of these encounters was to analyse the results of the screening procedure and surveys, gather feedback on the format of the criteria and identify barriers to their fulfilment. These interviews and focus groups were based on a guiding document prepared within WP2 to provide a common baseline for all the interviews and focus groups. The guiding document drew on the results reported in deliverables D2.1 and D2.2. A template for reporting the conclusions of each interview and focus group was also prepared and both these documents can be found as annexes to this report. A total of 52 reports were received, corresponding to 30 in-depth interviews and 22 focus groups with a total of 115 interviewees. These included:

- 36 Joint Programme Coordinators
- 11 Students // Alumni
- 12 Heads of Department
- 6 Department Coordinators
- 5 Project Managers
- 5 Administrative Staff
- 4 Technical staff
- 10 Academic staff
- 20 Representatives from Ministries and QAAs
- 6 Representatives from associated partner universities

A summary of the reports received was prepared and used to feed into the WP2 material for the EDLab workshop held in Pompeu Fabra University (Barcelona). The resulting document (in an anonymised format) is available as an annex.

On 11-12th January 2023 representatives from the 13 EDLab partner HEIs, as well as from several associate partner HEIs, met in Pompeu Fabra University for the second EDLab workshop. The first day of the

workshop was mainly devoted to in-depth discussions on the precise wording of the European degree label criteria. Firstly, a series of general considerations were agreed, which served to guide the decisions taken afterwards regarding the individual criteria. The criteria were re-ordered into sections inspired by the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) and the European approach for the quality assurance of joint programmes (EA) resulting in the following section headings:

- i) Programme organisation and management
- ii) Learning experience
- iii) Learning resources and student and staff support
- iv) Core values

The different sections were discussed by small working groups of 10-12 participants, with a moderator and rapporteur assigned to each group. The outcomes of the discussions in each group were shared in plenary sessions and consensus reached on the final recommendations.

A final version of the criteria based on the recommendations made in the workshop was then drawn up for approval by the EDLab Steering Committee in preparation for its inclusion in deliverable 2.3.

CHAPTER 3: RESULTS

This chapter of results comprises five main elements:

1. General considerations regarding the European degree label,
2. A table setting out our recommendations for the criteria
3. Rationale for the recommendations made and guidelines for applying the criteria,
4. A glossary.
5. Identification of barriers

1. General considerations

These general considerations form the basis on which the recommendations on the format of the criteria have been made. Reaching agreement on aspects such as the added value of the European degree label, its scope, and how the criteria should be applied was considered a necessary first step in composing our final recommendations.

Added value of the European Degree Label

The Label should be seen as a marker of excellence in European jointness. It should be distinctive, easily recognisable, with reputational value, and act as an incentive for transformation and enhancement of programmes, institutions, alliances and regional and national systems. Its overall goal should be systemic change.

As such the criteria for the award of the Label should be restrictive and the award made only to those programmes which actually guarantee excellence in European jointness, while respecting the necessary and positive diversity in individual programmes.

The Label is seen as a necessary intermediate step towards the implementation of a full European degree, which should be a mid- to long-term goal, with two further scenarios: (1) the implementation of a “European degree” in national legislation guaranteeing full recognition on a par with other national diplomas, potentially followed in the much longer term by (2) the implementation of a “European degree” at European level, necessitating a modification of the Treaty.

Scope of the Label

It would be interesting to explore how the Label could cover all higher education levels of EQF, including EQF 5.

Given the different nature of EQF 8, it would be appropriate to produce separate tables of criteria for EQF 5, 6 and 7 on the one hand, and EQF 8 on the other.

Similarly, the general approach for the Label should also be applicable to microcredentials and other short academic offer, although it is advisable to draft a specific version for these in order to ensure an agile and flexible approach in keeping with their nature.

Criteria for the award of the Label

For clarity and ease of application, all criteria should be mandatory, avoiding confusion over the meaning of optional, additional or voluntary criteria.

Criteria should be clear and transparent, with simple formulations, avoiding different expressions of modality (“preferably”, “where possible”...) and examples.

Criteria should be formulated in such a way as to avoid misinterpretation, but to this end should also be accompanied by a clear glossary of terminology applied and extensive guidelines explaining all basic concepts and giving diverse examples of ways to comply, especially in the light of the complex multilingual and multicultural context in which they will be used.

Criteria should correspond clearly to the heading given in each case.

In general, the criteria should cover all aspects of the programmes: management, learning experience and student and staff support.

The role of academic and administrative staff should be explicitly recognised both due to the added value for staff of including a European dimension in their professional activity, and also as recognition of the central role of staff for the success of joint programmes.

It should also be remembered that programmes run in institutional contexts and that not all the criteria should be understood as the responsibility of the individual programme, but rather as the explicit joint institutional responsibility of the HEIs involved.

The criteria should be organized conceptually into the various areas of programme excellence: programme management; learning experience; student and staff support and core values.

The criteria should be related explicitly to the relevant ESG standards as well as those of the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes. Similarly, reference should also be made to existing EHEA tools (ECTS, Diploma Supplement, etc.), ensuring synergies and coherent implementation of those tools.

Criteria should be aligned and coherent with EU policies in general (Treaty, European Education Area, European Research Area, European Strategy for Universities, EU language policy, EU cohesion policy, environmental sustainability policies, ...).

Evaluation of compliance

Evaluation of compliance should be incorporated into European Approach procedures to avoid duplication of effort, although programmes undergoing new or renewal accreditation procedures should be able to apply for the Label evaluation. The award of the Label should be registered in DEQAR to ensure transparency and traceability.

Depending on the criterion, compliance should be evaluated on either a two-tier (fully compliant; non-compliant) or three-tier scale (fully compliant; partially compliant; non-compliant). As part of the evaluation process, programmes with a limited number of partially compliant elements that can be remedied within a reasonable timeframe, should be given a short period of time to redress those elements, following which the Label is fully awarded or not. To avoid confusion or potential damage for individual students' expectations or programme reputation, there should be no publicity on the awarding of the Label until a programme is evaluated as fully compliant with all the criteria.

Other considerations (recommendations for the European Commission)

Adequate funding should be foreseen to support JP in the future and ensure equal access and opportunities. The funding should apply both to the joint programme design phase and to student support, especially but not exclusively for physical mobility periods.

2. European degree label criteria: recommendations

The following table represents our recommendations for the criteria, taking into account the general considerations expressed above. The meetings taking place in the context of the six pilot projects with DG EAC are also feeding into the discussion, as well as the work still being carried out in the other EDLab workpackages. This version of the criteria should therefore be seen as the current version, a work-in-progress, which will continue to evolve.

EDLab Version January 2024			
EUROPEAN DEGREE LABEL CRITERIA			EQF levels
Programme organisation and management	Higher education institutions involved	The joint programme is offered by at least 3 higher education institutions from at least 3 different EU Member States.	6,7,8
	Joint degree delivery	The joint programme is jointly designed and jointly delivered by all the higher education institutions involved.	6,7,8

		The joint programme leads to the award of a joint degree.	6,7,8
		A joint diploma supplement is issued to students.	6,7
		The joint programme is aligned with the corresponding EQF level.	6,7, 8
		The joint programme describes the learning outcomes and credits in line with the ECTS Users Guide.	6,7
	Quality assurance arrangements	Internal and external Quality Assurance is conducted in accordance with the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG). The institutions, the study field or the programme are evaluated by an EQAR registered agency.	6,7,8
		The joint programme is evaluated using the European approach for quality assurance of joint programmes (EA)	6,7,8
	Joint arrangements	The joint programme has joint structures and/or mechanisms to establish and monitor joint policies and procedures.	6,7,8
		The joint programme has joint procedures for selection, admission and degree-awarding.	6,7,8
	Graduate tracking	The joint programme monitors graduates through a graduate tracking system.	6,7,8
	Public information, promotion and awareness-raising	The HEIs offering the joint programme provide the necessary information about the joint programme	6,7,8
		The HEIs offering the joint programme ensure the visibility of the joint programme.	6,7 8
Learning experience	Flexible and embedded student mobility arrangements	The joint programme includes at least 1 period of compulsory physical mobility at another partner institution corresponding to a total of at least 60 ECTS. The JP has a policy offering alternatives for students who are unable to travel.	6
		The joint programme includes at least 1 period of compulsory physical mobility at another partner institution corresponding to a total of at least 30 ECTS. The JP has a policy offering alternatives for students who are unable to travel.	7

		The joint programme includes a total of at least 6 months of compulsory physical mobility at another partner institution. The JP has a policy offering alternatives for students who are unable to travel.	8
	Multilingualism	During the joint programme, all students are exposed to at least 2 different EU official languages.	6,7,8
	Learning approaches	The joint programme is delivered in a way that encourages students to take an active role in the learning process, and the assessment of students reflects this approach.	6,7,8
		The joint programme includes embedded intersectoral components or activities.	6,7,8
		Dissertations are co-evaluated by a committee with members from at least 2 different institutions located in 2 different countries.	7,8
		The joint programme has joint policies for assessment, recognition and internship regulations (if any).	6,7,8
Learning resources and student and staff support	Transnational campus – access to services	The learning resources and student and staff support services provided by the partner institutions are made available to students and staff participating in the joint programme under the same conditions as to students and staff participating in local programmes .	6,7,8
	Guidance and counselling	Guidance and counselling services are offered to the students enrolled on the joint programme.	6,7,8
	Transnational campus for staff	The joint programme provides opportunities for interaction and joint activities between partner institutions for academic and administrative staff.	6,7,8
	Joint policies for teaching staff	The joint programme has joint policies to ensure the competence of teaching staff.	6,7,8
Core values	Democratic values	The joint programme's joint policies reflect and promote democratic values.	6,7,8
	Inclusiveness	The joint programme commits to wide participation by fostering diversity, equity and inclusion in its admission policies and processes, and by adopting tailored measures to support disadvantaged students and staff.	6,7,8

		The joint programme commits to respect the principles of the European Charter for Researchers and Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers.	8
	Green transition	The joint programme agrees on policies and actions related to environmental sustainability and implements measures to minimise the environmental footprint of its activities.	6,7
		The joint programme commits to the principles of the MSCA Green Charter.	8

3. Rationale and Guidelines

The rationale for the recommendations made concerning each of the criteria are briefly explained, and an initial version of the guidelines that would accompany the criteria are presented. It should be noted that this is a first approximation to the possible content of the guidelines, which should be developed in their final form in close collaboration with relevant stakeholders once the criteria have been finalised at European level and the procedure for their application has been established.

Section 1: Programme organisation and management

- **Higher education institutions involved:**
 - **The joint programme is offered by at least 3 higher education institutions from at least 3 different EU Member States (EQF 6,7, 8)**

Rationale: Increasing the minimum to 3 both for the number of HEIs and the number of EU Member States involved adds to the multicultural and multilingual value, the “European” nature of the JP. It aligns the European degree label with many EU programme requirements, including Erasmus Mundus criteria. Multilateral cooperation among EU HEIs is reinforced and encouraged. Also, at EQF 8, a clear differentiation is made between co-tutelle arrangements and a JP.

Guidelines: These are the minimum requirements. Beyond this minimum, there are no restrictions on the number of HEIs that participate in the JP or the countries they are from, within or beyond the EU.

- **Joint degree delivery:**
 - **The joint programme is jointly designed and jointly delivered by all the higher education institutions involved. (EQF 6,7,8)**

Rationale: The joint nature of the programme is the very basis of a joint degree. Students should experience the programme as a single joint whole, not as separate parts provided by different partner institution and put together to form a whole. By separating this criterion from the previous one, more relevance is given to the joint design and delivery of the JP.

Guidelines: The joint design of the JP is shown through agreement and alignment (specified in the consortium agreement or in other related joint documents) among the partners on the format and content of the programme, with jointly designed learning outcomes at programme level as a minimum.

The joint delivery of the JP is shown through agreement on joint delivery (specified in the consortium agreement or in other related joint documents) demonstrating that all partners contribute to teaching and/or the provision of other learning activities that form part of the JP.

- **The joint programme leads to the award of a joint degree (EQF 6,7,8)**

Rationale: A Joint degree is a basic element to reflect the joint nature of the programme. The ED label should act as an incentive for transformation and enhancement of programmes, institutions, alliances and regional and national systems, and promote alignment with existing EHEA tools.

Guidelines: The joint degree awarded to students who successfully complete the JP should be a single document issued by, or on behalf of, all JP partner institutions, regardless of where the students have studied, or what mobility path they have followed during the programme. This reflects the fact that the student has successfully completed a JP offered by the awarding institutions. This joint diploma is the legally valid document in the countries of all the partner institutions (implying that no additional local diploma is issued).

- **A joint diploma supplement is issued to students. (EQF 6,7).**

Rationale: The diploma supplement is an important tool for recognition of qualifications and is one of the Europass framework transparency tools. A joint diploma supplement is necessary to reflect the joint nature of the programme and ensure all students graduating from the JP are issued with the same document.

Guidelines: A single joint diploma supplement is issued to all graduates using a model agreed on by the partner institutions and adapted to the joint nature of the programme, and containing all the necessary information to comply with [requirements](#). A joint diploma supplement issued with a joint degree should clearly describe all parts of the degree and contain information on the type and level of qualification awarded; the institutions that issued the qualification; the content of the course and the results gained, the institutions in which the student has earned the different parts of the degree and details of the national education systems.

- **The joint programme is aligned with the corresponding EQF level (EQF 6,7 8)**

Rationale: This criterion has been added to encourage alignment with existing EHEA tools and to facilitate the application of the criteria to other shorter academic offer such as microcredentials.

Guidelines: Alignment of the JP with the relevant aspects of the EQF.

- **The joint programme describes the learning outcomes and credits in line with the ECTS Users Guide. (EQF 6,7)**

Rationale: This criterion has been modified to encourage alignment with existing EHEA tools and to ensure that curricular design is based on reaching intended learning outcomes, an aspect which was not present in the previous proposal, although it appears in the heading. The Users Guide contains advice on curricular design.

Guidelines: Alignment of the JP with the relevant aspects of the [ECTS users guide](#).

- **Quality Assurance arrangements:**
 - **Internal and external Quality Assurance is conducted in accordance with the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG). The institutions, the study field or the programme are evaluated by an EQAR registered agency. (EQF 6,7,8)**
 - **The joint programme is evaluated using the European approach for quality assurance of joint programmes (EA) (EQF 6,7,8).**

Rationale: The ED label should act as an incentive for transformation and enhancement of programmes, institutions, alliances and regional and national systems, and promote alignment with existing EHEA tools. The order in which the different levels of evaluation are mentioned has been modified to a more logical order, starting with evaluation at institutional level, then the field of study and finally the programme. The term “accredited” has been removed, leaving only the term “evaluated” in line with the scope of the processes referred to. The phrase “If external quality assurance is required at programme level in the countries involved” has been removed as the EA is considered a necessary procedure for all JPs wishing to apply for the European degree label. Finally, the term “transnational programme” has been replaced by “joint programme” for consistency and clarity in the use of terminology.

Guidelines: Alignment of the JP QA arrangements with the ESG. Evaluation procedures are carried out by an EQAR registered agency. Evaluation of the JP is carried out by means of the European approach for quality assurance of joint programmes (EA).

- **Joint arrangements**
 - **The joint programme has joint structures and/or mechanisms to establish and monitor joint policies and procedures. (EQF 6,7,8)**

Rationale: This criterion has been included to emphasise the importance of creating the necessary structures for joint decision-making and monitoring.

Guidelines: All necessary joint structures are in place to ensure that joint policies, procedures and arrangements for the JP are agreed on, implemented and monitored. These may include joint committees and boards, and may be programme specific or, for example, set up at alliance level.

- **The joint programme has joint procedures for selection, admission and degree-awarding. (EQF 6,7,8)**

Rationale: The elements in this criterion have been separated from the original criterion on “Joint policies for the joint programme” in order to ensure that the criteria in each section correspond more clearly to the heading given. Selection and admission of students and degree-awarding procedures are part of programme organisation and management.

Guidelines: The joint procedures for selection and admission of students and for the awarding of the degree are specified in the consortium agreement or in other related joint documents.

- **Graduate tracking**
 - **The joint programme monitors graduates through a graduate tracking system. (EQF 6,7,8).**

Rationale: Use of the term *tracking* is preferred as it is more closely aligned with terminology used at national level in many EU countries and avoids possible misinterpretation of the term *outcomes*. In order to emphasise the importance of not only having a graduate tracking system adapted to JPs but actively using the information gathered (for quality assurance, promotion of the programme, informed decision-making on funding and legislative issues, etc.) the criterion is expressed using more pro-active wording: “The JP monitors graduates through ...” rather than “The JP has a system to monitor graduate outcomes”.

Guidelines: The graduate tracking system employed can be at programme level or at institutional level, but is adapted to the characteristics of the JP and contains the same elements for all the JP graduates. When a European-wide fit-for-purpose graduate tracking system for JPs has been developed (such as an adapted version of the EUROGRADUATE initiative), this should be used.

➤ **Public information, promotion and awareness-raising**

- **The HEIs offering the joint programme provide the necessary information about the joint programme (EQF 6,7,8).**

Rationale: In line with the decision that all criteria should be mandatory, this criterion is no longer optional, thereby highlighting the importance of providing the necessary information for students and other relevant stakeholders such as future employers. This is also in line with ESG 1.8 *Public information*.

Guidelines: Information about the joint study programme and its activities is jointly prepared and is clear, accurate, objective, up-to-date and readily accessible for students and other relevant stakeholders such as future employers.

➤ **Promotion and awareness-raising**

- **The HEIs offering the joint programme ensure the visibility of the joint programme. (EQF 6,7, 8)**

Rationale: In line with the decision that all criteria should be mandatory, this criterion is no longer optional.

Guidelines: The HEIs offering the joint programme ensure the visibility of the programme through promotion and awareness-raising activities that are clearly joint in nature are agreed and specified in the consortium agreement or in other related joint documents.

Section 2: Learning experience

➤ **Flexible and embedded student mobility arrangements:**

- **The JP includes at least 1 period of compulsory physical mobility at another partner institution corresponding to a total of at least 60 ECTS. The JP has a policy offering alternatives for students who are unable to travel. (EQF 6)**

Rationale: This criterion has been modified to be more inclusive by ensuring alternatives for those students who are unable to undertake a period of physical mobility. The length of the period of mobility has been extended in the belief that 60 ECTS should be the minimum mobility period on a JP at EQF 6. This also allows for the use of Erasmus + mobility grants to cover the mobility period.

Guidelines: Physical mobility corresponds to a total of at least 60 ECTS and can be the sum of several shorter mobility periods.

The alternatives offered for students unable to undertake a period of physical mobility are adapted to the nature of the JP and agreed by the partner institutions involved. They are set out in a mobility policy which clearly explains under what circumstances a student is able to opt for these alternatives.

- **The joint programme includes at least 1 period of compulsory physical mobility at another partner institution corresponding to a total of at least 30 ECTS. The JP has a policy offering alternatives for students who are unable to travel. (EQF 7)**

Rationale: This criterion has been modified to be more inclusive by ensuring alternatives for those students who are unable to undertake a period of physical mobility.

Guidelines: Physical mobility corresponds to a total of at least 30 ECTS and can be the sum of several shorter mobility periods.

The alternatives offered for students unable to undertake a period of physical mobility are adapted to the nature of the JP and agreed by the partner institutions involved. They are set out in a mobility policy which clearly explains under what circumstances a student is able to opt for these alternatives.

- **The JP includes a total of at least 6 months of compulsory physical mobility at another partner institution. The JP has a policy offering alternatives for students who are unable to travel. (EQF 8)**

Rationale: This criterion has been modified to be more inclusive by ensuring alternatives for those students who are unable to undertake a period of physical mobility. The reference to opportunities to participate in a series of activities at another partner institution has been included in the guidelines as a recommendation.

Guidelines: The minimum period of at least six months of physical mobility can be the sum of several shorter mobility periods and can include secondment. In addition to physical mobility, opportunities for doctoral candidates to participate in other transnational activities (such as international conferences and joint research publications) at another partner institution are encouraged.

The alternatives offered for students unable to undertake a period of physical mobility are adapted to the nature of the JP and agreed by the partner institutions involved. They are set out in a mobility policy which clearly explains under what circumstances a student is able to opt for these alternatives.

- **Multilingualism:**
 - **During the JP, all students are exposed to at least two different EU official languages.**

Rationale: This criterion has been made clearer and simplified to avoid misinterpretations, and aligned with the European Union's [language policy](#) which aims at passive mastery of two EU languages apart from the native language for the entire population of the European Union. Language diversity is an essential feature of Europe, and at least passive multilingualism is an identifying feature of European-ness.

Guidelines: This criterion is not intended to impose high levels of accredited language competence, but rather to ensure exposure to different languages, raising language and intercultural awareness.

Exposure to two different EU languages may take a wide range of forms, allowing for considerable diversity amongst JPs, depending on the disciplinary field, the institutions involved, and the sociolinguistic context. Some examples, both face-to-face and on-line are:

- availability of language courses or activities such as language cafés in a range of languages at the different universities where the student follows the JP, whether or not these receive ECTS credit;
- the language(s) acting as the language(s) of instruction or assessment at the different universities where the student follows the JP;

- language immersion through living in a context where other EU languages are spoken as the local vehicular language(s);
- seminars, academic or extracurricular activities held in languages other than the language(s) of instruction or the local language.

Language support is an essential part of preparation for mobility guaranteeing a quality experience, and is necessarily taken into account by JPs. JPs carefully identify the language requirements for the various mobility pathways involved in the delivery of the programme, and ensure guidance is available for students during the pre-mobility phase, as well as during the actual mobility periods, both on where and how to find language preparation support and on how to demonstrate language level in fulfilment of requirements. Clear information is available on the JP website for all potential and current students.

➤ **Learning approaches:**

- **The JP is delivered in a way that encourages students to take an active role in the learning process, and the assessment of students reflects this approach (EQF 6,7).**

Rationale: The following criteria, under the heading “learning approaches”, are all related to aspects of the approach to the learning process in the joint programme. This first criterion has been adapted for closer alignment with the ESG (1.3 - Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment). This is achieved by focusing on student-centred learning.

Guidelines: (Based on ESG 1.3) The JP implements student-centred learning, teaching and assessment by encouraging a sense of autonomy in the learner, while ensuring adequate guidance and support from the teacher; using different modes of delivery, supporting learning with digital tools and a variety of pedagogical methods where appropriate, respecting and attending to the diversity of students and their needs, enabling flexible learning paths.

Considering the importance of assessment for the students’ progression and their future careers, the assessment allows students to demonstrate the extent to which the intended learning outcomes have been achieved and to receive feedback, which, if necessary, is linked to advice on the learning process.

- **The JP includes embedded intersectoral components or activities (EQF 6,7,8).**

Rationale: This criterion incorporates elements previously included in optional criteria 3, 4 and 5 related to cooperation with other sectors (businesses, industries, civil society, the public sector, etc.)

Guidelines: Connections with the world of work and civil society are ensured in the joint programme by incorporating diverse intersectoral elements such as international internships, work-based learning, secondment / placement, service learning and/or challenge-based approaches.

- **Dissertations are co-evaluated by a committee with members from at least 2 different institutions located in 2 different countries (EQF 7, 8).**

Rationale: This criterion, which was previously listed under “transnational joint degree delivery”, has been incorporated into this section on learning approaches. In addition, it has been extended to include EQF 7, as co-evaluation of dissertations is considered an important element in a JP at both levels and, according to the surveys and interviews carried out in the scope of this project, is already a widely used practice in many JPs at EQF 7.

Guidelines: Co-evaluation of dissertations is considered an important element of a JP, both at EQF 7 and 8. The JP ensures that dissertations are co-evaluated by a committee with members from at least 2 different partner institutions located in 2 different countries, following jointly agreed procedures and evaluation criteria. This should be specified in the consortium agreement or in other related joint documents.

- **The joint programme has joint policies for assessment, recognition and internship regulations (if any). (EQF 6,7,8)**

Rationale: The elements in this criterion have been separated from the original criterion on “Joint policies for the joint programme” in order to ensure that the criteria in each section correspond more clearly to the heading given.

Guidelines: The joint procedures for assessment, recognition and internship regulations (if any) are specified in the consortium agreement or in other related joint documents.

Section 3: Learning resources and student and staff support

- **Transnational campus – access to services**
 - **The learning resources and student and staff support services provided by the partner institutions are made available to students and staff participating in the JP under the same conditions as to students and staff participating in local programmes. (EQF 6,7, 8).**

Rationale: The modifications to this criterion reflect the view that all students should have equal access to services. “Seamless and free” has therefore been replaced by “under the same conditions as ...”. Providing services for staff involved in the JP has been specified in the criterion to emphasise that staff support is also important in the context of a JP.

Guidelines: The support services referred to may include IT services, (online) library services, faculty development and support, psychological counselling, career advice services, alumni systems, etc. Access to these services in the participating institutions is clearly set out in the consortium agreement or in other related joint documents and arrangements are put in place to eliminate barriers.

- **Guidance and counselling**
 - **Guidance and counselling services are offered to the students enrolled on the joint programme (EQF 6,7,8).**

Rationale: This criterion has been included to draw attention to the need to provide suitable support services to students enrolled on joint programmes, given the added complexity and demands JPs often have for students. It includes elements that were formerly part of the criterion on Joint policies for the joint programme.

Guidelines: The provision of guidance and counselling is jointly agreed and specified in the consortium agreement or in other related joint documents. Clear information about these services is available for all potential and current students.

- **Transnational campus for staff**
 - **The JP provides opportunities for interaction and joint activities between partner institutions for academic and administrative staff (EQF 6,7,8).**

Rationale: A JP that aspires to be awarded the European degree label should provide a quality European experience not only for the students enrolled on the JP but also for the staff involved in its preparation, provision and delivery. This criterion has been included to ensure that provision is made for interaction between the staff involved in the programme at the partner institutions.

Guidelines: The JP provides opportunities for staff involved in the JP to participate in joint activities and interactions, which may be face-to-face or virtual, between partner institutions. Some examples are staff weeks to share good practices in the management of JPs, online meetings of staff carrying out similar roles in the administration of the JP, online language cafés for staff, joint training opportunities for academic staff in managing an intercultural classroom, etc. The opportunities provided would be jointly agreed on and set out in the consortium agreement or in other related joint documents.

➤ **Joint policies for teaching staff**

- **The joint programme has joint policies to ensure the competence of teaching staff**

Rationale: This criterion has been included to ensure jointly agreed arrangements are in place with regard to the competence of teaching staff. Particular attention should be paid to competence in language skills and management of an intercultural classroom, given the importance of this aspect in a joint programme.

Guidelines: Joint procedures are in place to ensure the competence of teaching staff and are specified in the consortium agreement or in other related joint documents.

Section 4: Core values

➤ **Democratic values**

- **The joint programme's joint policies reflect and promote democratic values (EQF 6,7,8).**

Rationale: This criterion is proposed as a minimum requirement (originally included as an optional criterion) due to the important role of education in strengthening common European values and democratic citizenship.

Guidelines: Respect for democracy is reflected in the joint programme's policies and procedures, by advocating and adhering to values such as respect, equality, fairness and freedom. The [Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture](#) developed by the Council of Europe may serve as a point of reference. Democratic values should be patent in the organisational culture of the JP. This is reflected in the consortium agreement or in other related joint documents

➤ **Inclusiveness**

- **The JP commits to wide participation by fostering diversity, equity and inclusion in its admission policies and processes, and by adopting tailored measures to support disadvantaged students and staff (EQF 6,7, 8).**

Rationale: This criterion has been adapted to include the terms diversity and equity, and goes beyond admission by including measures to support students in the belief that real inclusion requires ensuring support beyond the process of admission to the programme. The term “*all categories*” has been removed in response to the concern expressed through the surveys and interviews carried out as part of the pilot project to the effect that adopting measures for all categories of disadvantaged students is not viable for some JPs, such as those that require specific (often physical) competences to achieve the learning outcomes. Finally, support for disadvantaged staff as well as students has been added.

Guidelines: The admission policies and processes clearly indicate how diversity, equity and inclusion are fostered and support measures for disadvantaged students and staff are detailed in the consortium agreement or in other related joint documents.

- **The joint programme commits to respect the principles of the European Charter for Researchers and Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers (EQF 8).**

Rationale: This criterion has been split to remove the reference to the MSCA Green Charter in order to separate measures related to inclusion from those related to sustainability and the green transition.

Guidelines: Clear reference is made in the consortium agreement or in other related joint documents to the commitment to respect the principles mentioned, and processes and policies are place to ensure this alignment.

➤ **Green transition**

- **The joint programme agrees on policies and actions related to environmental sustainability and implements measures to minimise the environmental footprint of its activities. (EQF 6,7).**

Rationale: This criterion has been added to extend the commitment to environmentally sustainable practices to EQF 6, 7 (in the original criteria only EQF 8 was mentioned).

Guidelines: The consortium agreement or other related joint documents reflect the agreements adopted to promote environmental sustainability and minimise the environmental footprint of the JP. Students and staff are informed about these policies and aware of their role in complying with them.

- **The joint programme commits to the principles of the MSCA Green Charter (EQF 8).**

Rationale: This criterion reinforces the commitment to the Green transition at EQF 8.

Guidelines: Clear reference is made in the consortium agreement or in other related joint documents to the commitment to respect the principles of the MSCA Green Charter and processes and policies are place to ensure this alignment. Students and staff are informed about these principles and aware of their role in complying with them.

4. Glossary of terms

With regard to the terminology that features in the criteria and the guidelines, during the work carried out within WP2 it has become evident that there is a lack of familiarity among many stakeholders with some of the terms used, along with different interpretations of what exactly is being referred to. This is particularly evident at the level of academic staff and in many cases includes a lack of clear understanding of what is meant by terms such as joint programme and a joint degree, as well as a lack of familiarity with EQAR, EA and other concepts related to quality assurance. The fact that we are working in a multicultural, multilingual environment, in different national and institutional contexts, adds to the need to facilitate understanding of the terms used by providing clear definitions. Successful implementation of the European degree label will only be possible if the criteria are clearly understood by all stakeholders.

The following is an initial glossary to accompany the criteria and the guidelines. As has been mentioned previously in relation to other elements of this report, this is the current version of the glossary and will need to be updated to accommodate possible modifications to the criteria and the guidelines.

EDLab. European degree label: Glossary of terms for criteria and guidelines.

Assessment refers to the evaluation of the learner's progress and level of achievement of the learning outcomes of an educational component (unit/module). The assessment criteria and methods for an educational component should be appropriate and consistent with the learning outcomes that have been defined for it and with the learning activities that have taken place.¹

Co-tutelle: Joint supervision of a PhD candidate on the basis of a formal agreement between two or more HEIs.

Credits: ECTS credits express the volume of learning based on the defined learning outcomes and their associated workload. 60 ECTS credits are allocated to the learning outcomes and associated workload of a full-time academic year or its equivalent, which normally comprises a number of educational components to which credits (on the basis of the learning outcomes and workload) are allocated. ECTS credits are generally expressed in whole numbers.²

Diploma supplement: The Diploma Supplement is a document attached to a higher education diploma. It gives a detailed description of its holder's learning outcomes, and the nature, level, context, content and status of individual study components. It is a transparency instrument that was jointly developed by the Council of Europe, the European Commission and UNESCO and an updated version was adopted by the Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee in 2007. A diploma supplement is an important tool for graduates to ensure that their degrees are recognised by higher education institutions, public authorities and employers in their home countries and abroad.³

EQAR registered agency: The European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR) is the European Higher Education Area's official register of quality assurance agencies that substantially comply with the ESG.⁴

European approach for quality assurance of joint programmes (EA): The European approach comprises a single framework with standards and procedures for the assessment of international joint programmes. It was adopted by European Ministers responsible for higher education and was developed to facilitate integrated approaches to quality assurance of these programmes. It defines standards that are based on the agreed tools of the EHEA, without applying additional national criteria.⁵

European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS): The ECTS is a tool of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) for making studies and courses more transparent and thus helping to enhance the quality of higher education. It is a learner-centred system, based on the principle of transparency of learning, teaching and assessment processes. Its objective is to facilitate planning, delivery and evaluation of study programmes and student mobility by recognising learning achievements and qualifications and

¹ Source: ECTS Users' Guide <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/da7467e6-8450-11e5-b8b7-01aa75ed71a1>

² Source: ECTS Users' Guide <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/da7467e6-8450-11e5-b8b7-01aa75ed71a1>

³ Source: adapted from <https://europa.eu/europass/en/learn-europe/diploma-supplement> & <https://www.qqi.ie/sites/default/files/media/file-uploads/2.%20Guidelines%20for%20Completion%20of%20the%20Diploma%20Supplement%202020.pdf>

⁴ Source: EQAR <https://www.eqar.eu>

⁵ Source: EQAR <https://www.eqar.eu/kb/joint-programmes/>

periods of learning. The ECTS Users' Guide offers guidelines for implementing ECTS and links to useful supporting documents. The Guide is offered to students and other learners, academic and administrative staff in higher education institutions as well as to employers, education providers and all other interested stakeholders.⁶

European Qualifications Framework (EQF): The EQF is an 8-level, learning outcomes-based framework for all types of qualifications that serves as a translation tool between different national qualifications frameworks. This framework helps improve transparency, comparability and portability of people's qualifications and makes it possible to compare qualifications from different countries and institutions.⁷

European Standards and Guidelines (ESG): The Standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) were adopted at the EHEA Ministerial Conference in 2015 and provide the basis for enhancing trust, mobility and recognition between higher education systems. The ESG are divided into three parts: internal quality assurance, external quality assurance and quality assurance agencies. The ESG are designed to be applied to all higher education, regardless of place or mode of delivery. The Standards set out the agreed and accepted practice, while the Guidelines describe how the standards might be implemented.⁸

Graduate tracking refers to the process of collecting and analysing data from and about graduates after they complete their studies. This can happen at different points in time after graduation, often through either surveying a representative sample of graduates or linking relevant administrative data, or through a combination of these two methods. The most commonly collected indicators relate to graduates' education history, employment status, remuneration, further education and training, and satisfaction with education and job. Information gathered can also refer to socio-biographical and socio-economic backgrounds.⁹

Joint degree: The European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes defines a "joint degree" as "a single document awarded by higher education institutions offering the joint programme and nationally acknowledged as the recognised award of the joint programme."¹⁰

Joint programme: an integrated curriculum coordinated and offered jointly by different higher education institutions. (adapted from EA definition¹¹)

Learning outcomes: Statements of what a learner knows, understands and is able to do on completion of a learning process. The achievement of learning outcomes has to be assessed through procedures based on clear and transparent criteria. Learning outcomes are attributed to individual educational components and to programmes at a whole. They are also used in European and national qualifications frameworks to describe the level of the individual qualification.¹²

⁶ Sources: <https://education.ec.europa.eu/education-levels/higher-education/inclusive-and-connected-higher-education/european-credit-transfer-and-accumulation-system>

& <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/da7467e6-8450-11e5-b8b7-01aa75ed71a1>

⁷ Source: <https://europa.eu/europass/en/europass-tools/european-qualifications-framework>

⁸Source: ENQA <https://www.enqa.eu/esg-standards-and-guidelines-for-quality-assurance-in-the-european-higher-education-area/>

⁹Source:EuropeanParliament

[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2022/739220/EPRS_BRI\(2022\)739220_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2022/739220/EPRS_BRI(2022)739220_EN.pdf)

¹⁰ Source: <https://www.eqar.eu/kb/joint-programmes/definitions/>

¹¹ Source: <https://www.eqar.eu/kb/joint-programmes/definitions/>

¹² Source: ECTS Users' Guide <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/da7467e6-8450-11e5-b8b7-01aa75ed71a1>

Quality assurance refers to the process or set of processes adopted nationally and institutionally to ensure the quality of educational programmes and qualifications awarded. Quality assurance should ensure a learning environment in which the content of programmes, learning opportunities and facilities are fit for purpose. Quality assurance is often referred to in the context of a continuous improvement cycle (i.e. assurance and enhancement activities).¹³

Recognition: refers to the procedure carried out by HEIs when a person wishes to continue or to begin studying or to use an academic title after studies undertaken abroad. It might include prior learning and professional experience and periods of study as well as full degrees.¹⁴

5. Identification of Barriers

The information gathered from the three surveys carried out in the context of work package 2, and especially from the interviews and focus groups that took place both for work package 2 and with joint programme coordinators for work package 4, has confirmed that multiple barriers currently exist that could block, or at least hinder, the viability of obtaining the European degree label for many joint programmes.

It is well known that barriers exist at national level in several member states. Issuing joint degrees and recognising the European Approach are often cited as examples of legislative obstacles in some countries. The involvement of national authorities in the European degree label pilot projects seems to have had a positive effect in bringing these issues to the forefront. If we add to that the attention that the European Universities initiative has brought to bear on joint programmes and other formats of joint academic offer such as microcredentials, progress has clearly been made with some countries modifying their legislation to facilitate the delivery of this type of programme. Much remains to be done, however, even to achieve the goal of assuring full implementation of Bologna tools which have been formally accepted but whose roll-out is effectively blocked by current national legislation.

Barriers do not only exist at national level, however. Where higher education is regulated at regional level, similar issues often exist. For example, admission procedures may be linked to regional or national systems and do not allow for the specific procedures required by a joint programme. However, it is at institutional level where many barriers are evident in relation to the ability of joint programmes to comply with a significant number of the proposed criteria. In many cases, the difficulties are of a technical and administrative nature. The way students are registered in the HEIs system may dictate their access to services, for example. The graduate tracking systems used may not be adapted to the specific nature of joint programmes, but using an alternative tracking system for these programmes would raise technical and administrative issues. The regulations for the evaluation of dissertations may not contemplate joint evaluation committees. It is also true to say that in many cases, existing joint programmes have operated

¹³ Source: ECTS Users' Guide <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/da7467e6-8450-11e5-b8b7-01aa75ed71a1>

¹⁴Source:ENIC-NARIC<https://www.enic-naric.net/page-academic-recognition-procedures#:~:text=Academic%20recognition%20is%20normally%20done,as%20well%20as%20full%20degrees>

in an ad-hoc way, finding solutions and “ways round” the obstacles. A successful and sustainable roll-out of the European degree (label) would require a change of mind-set both top-down and bottom-up at institutional level, and acceptance that procedures can be changed. Expressions such as “we don’t do it like that in my institution” need to be replaced with an institution-wide willingness to analyse what can be done to align systems and procedures to facilitate inter-institutional collaboration through joint programmes. The HEIs involved in European university alliances are well placed to do this, and indeed have already made significant progress towards changing mind-sets and also in adapting procedures etc. To summarise, ensuring the successful roll-out of the European degree (label) involves achieving buy-in and a willingness to identify, analyse and minimise barriers at all levels, from national authorities to Faculty boards.

CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSIONS AND OBSERVATIONS

This deliverable offers recommendations on the criteria from the perspective of the general considerations agreed on by the EDLab steering committee. We believe that the European degree label should be seen as a marker of excellence in European jointness, and should act as an incentive for transformation and enhancement of programmes, institutions, alliances, and regional and national systems. Its overall goal should be systemic change.

The criteria should be mandatory, avoiding confusion over the meaning of optional, additional or voluntary criteria. They should be clear and transparent, with simple formulations designed to avoid misinterpretation, but to this end should also be accompanied by a clear glossary of terminology applied and extensive guidelines explaining all basic concepts and giving diverse examples of ways to comply, especially in the light of the complex multilingual and multicultural context in which they will be used.

The role of academic and administrative staff should be explicitly recognised in the criteria both due to the added value for staff of including a European dimension in their professional activity, and also as recognition of the central role of staff for the success of joint programmes.

It is widely recognised that many barriers exist at all levels that would prevent some joint programmes being awarded the European degree label. However, it is also true to say that in the current context of change in the European higher education area through the roll-out of the European University Initiative, as well as the involvement of a wide variety of stakeholders in the many discussions around the European degree label and the related criteria that are currently taking place through the work of the six pilot projects and also at the level of the European Commission itself, the realisation that these barriers need to be identified and, where possible, dismantled is starting to take hold.

We hope that the recommendations presented in this report, which are the fruit of an extensive procedure of consultation and discussion, will contribute to the final version of the criteria and to a successful and sustainable implementation of the European degree label.

DISCLAIMER

EDLab is co-funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or EACEA. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

Annex 1: Guidelines for Interviews and focus groups

WORK PACKAGE 2: TASK 2.3

GUIDE FOR FOCUS GROUPS AND IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

List of European criteria for the joint transnational programmes to test a joint European degree label.

Minimum requirements

- **Higher education institutions involved**

Minimum requirement: The joint programme is jointly designed and delivered by at least 2 higher education institutions from at least 2 different EU Member States (EQF 6,7, 8).

Survey 2: Although 94.9% of respondents categorised this criterion as either very suitable (71.9%) or quite suitable (23%), the comments they provided made reference to some elements that merit further discussion.

Survey 3: This criterion is fulfilled by 129 (83%) of the 155 joint programmes included in survey 3. Of the 26 joint programmes that do not fulfil the criterion, 20 have partner institutions outside the EU.

Discussion points:

- How far do you agree/disagree with the following opinions? Would you recommend changing the criterion to include any of them?
 - the minimum should be 3 HEIs from 3 EU member states, in line with the general rule for most EU projects.
 - the minimum number of HEIs/member states should be different for the different EQF levels, with some proposing 3 HEIs from 3 EU member states at EQF 6 and 7 but 2 HEIs from 2 EU member states at EQF 8, and others proposing a higher number for EQF 8 than for EQF 6 and 7.
 - Instead of EU member states, the criterion should refer to EEA member states.
 - Joint programmes on a national level should also be included, as long as the teaching is delivered in a different European language to the national language(s).

It is worth mentioning that, according to the call for proposals ERASMUS-EDU-2022-POL-EXP through which this project was granted, the *Council Recommendation on building bridges for effective European higher education cooperation* adopted by the Council on 5 April 2022 invites the Commission to “pilot in 2022 the development and implementation under Erasmus+ of European criteria for the award of a joint European degree label. Such a label would be issued as a complementary certificate to the qualifications obtained by students graduating from joint programmes delivered in the context of transnational cooperation between several higher education institutions”. The use of the term “several” HEIs implies more than 2.

- With regard to the way the criterion is expressed, including more than one element in a single criterion was questioned. For example, if a joint programme includes at least 2 HEIs from at least 2 different EU Member States, but is not jointly designed and/or jointly delivered, does this mean the criterion has not been fulfilled?

It was suggested that this could be resolved by separating the different elements into separate criteria.

- The joint programme is offered by at least 2 HEIs from at least 2 different EU Member States.
- The joint programme is jointly designed and delivered.

Do you agree with this proposal?

- Regarding procedures necessary to provide evidence of compliance with the criteria, what documents could be used to show that a joint programme was jointly designed?

- **Transnational joint degree delivery**

Minimum requirement: The joint programme leads to the award of a joint degree (EQF 6,7,8).

Survey 2: 89.2% of respondents considered this criterion to be very suitable (64.7%) or quite suitable (24.5%).

Survey 3: 63 joint programmes (41% of those surveyed) indicated compliance with this criterion, although the observations made by several of these respondents show that the degree offered is in fact a double degree not a joint degree.

Of the 92 joint programmes (59%) that do not offer a joint degree, 64 indicated that a joint degree is the preferred option but cannot be awarded due to technical, legal or administrative restrictions.

In the case of 13 joint programmes, a joint degree is not awarded by choice, as a double/multiple degree is considered the preferable option.

Discussion points:

- Although a joint degree is generally seen as desirable, in many cases it cannot be awarded due to restrictive legislation in some member states. Is it too limiting to include this as a minimum criterion at this stage or will it serve as a stimulus to remove the existing barriers?
- The opinion was expressed that the political prioritisation of a joint degree over the other formats can seem rather artificial. Given that some believe that a double or multiple degree can be equally valid and is in fact sometimes preferred, do you agree that a joint degree should be the only valid format to obtain the European degree label?

Minimum requirement: Dissertations are co-evaluated by supervisors or a committee with members from at least 2 different institutions located in 2 different countries (EQF 8).

Survey 2: 79.8% of respondents consider the criterion to be very (48.9%) or quite (30.9%) suitable. In general, co-evaluation of dissertations is considered as positive although comments include the need to include not only co-evaluation but also co-supervision of dissertations. Another concern is the viability of co-evaluation given the different systems and regulations governing the composition and functioning of evaluation of doctoral dissertations in different national contexts and individual institutions.

It was suggested that this criterion should also apply at EQF 7.

Survey 3: 75% of joint programmes reported fulfilment of the criterion.

Discussion points:

- Do you think that this criterion should include co-supervision of dissertations as well as co-evaluation?
- What barriers exist to the co-evaluation and co-supervision of dissertations, if any?
- Should this criterion also apply to EQF 7, for master's dissertations?

- **Transparency of the learning outcomes**

Minimum requirement: The joint programme is described in ECTS (EQF 6,7).

Survey 2: 92.8% of respondents considered this criterion it to be very suitable (74.8%) or quite suitable (18%).

Survey 3: 140 (98%) of the 143 joint programmes reported use of ECTS.

While this criterion has a high level of acceptance and compliance, several respondents referred to difficulties in the use of ECTS due to:

- a) different national or institutional limitations on the maximum and minimum number of ECTS for a single module
- b) differences in the number of teaching hours assigned per ECTS credit
- c) different interpretations of the ECTS grading scheme
- d) joint programmes that include non-EU partners who may require the use of a different system
- e) certain activities may not find exact correspondence with an amount of ECTS as not all study and training experiences can be exactly measured in terms of hours/credits.

- The ECTS system has been in use for many years, and yet difficulties are still being reported (see above). Do you agree with the suggestion that the use of other more flexible methods of describing joint programmes, such as micro-credentials or open badges, should also be envisaged in the criteria for the European Degree label?

Minimum requirement: A joint Diploma Supplement is issued to the student at the end of the joint study programme (EQF 6, 7).

Survey 2: 89.2% of respondents considered this criterion to be either very suitable (67.6%) or quite suitable (21.6%).

Survey 3: 69 (48.3%) of the 143 joint programmes at EQF levels 6 and 7 issue a joint diploma supplement. Of the 74 (51.7%) who do not, 36 indicate technical or legal difficulties. In many cases it is stated that each institution automatically awards all students its own diploma supplement in a standard format and difficulties are cited with issuing individualised models for joint programmes.

Discussion points:

- In view of the above, should a joint diploma supplement be a minimum requirement to obtain the European Degree Label?
- Would a European template for a diploma supplement for European joint programmes be a useful tool to promote and facilitate its use?

- **Quality assurance arrangements**

Minimum requirement:

i) Internal and external Quality Assurance is conducted in accordance with the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG).

ii) The programme, the study field or the institutions are accredited/evaluated by an EQAR registered agency.

iii) If external quality assurance is required at programme level in the countries involved, the transnational programme should be accredited/evaluated preferably using the European approach for quality assurance of joint programmes (EA) (EQF 6,7,8).

Survey 2: In this survey, parts i) and ii) of this criterion were included in the same question. 87% of respondents agreed that these requirements were very suitable (53.2%) or quite suitable (33.8%). Evaluation performed by EQAR-registered agencies provides a guarantee that QA will be conducted in accordance with the ESG. However, for member states such as Italy, which is not currently a member of EQAR, this is seen as a barrier. Concerns were expressed regarding difficulties in aligning internal QA arrangements among the partners in accordance with national and institutional regulations, and the need to ensure alignment between internal and external QA.

For part iii) of the question, 82.1% of respondents regarded it as very suitable (50.4%) or quite suitable (31.7%). Several respondents commented on the need to improve the use and acceptance of the European Approach across the EU as it is currently not widely used, and is not (fully) recognised in some member states. Including the EA in this criterion was seen as an opportunity to promote the EA and review its functioning. One of the EDLab focus countries, Italy, does not currently recognise the EA and this is obviously viewed as a significant barrier.

Survey 3: Fulfilment of criteria: i) 80% yes; 20% no. ii) 65% yes; 35% no. iii) 39% yes; 61% no.

The comments and observations indicate a lack of familiarity with terms such as EGAR and the EA, as well as a lack of knowledge of the procedures carried out in partner institutions within the joint programme. Several responses indicate plans to implement use of the EA in future editions of the joint programme.

Discussion points:

As far as the wording of the criterion is concerned, several respondents found the use of the term “preferably” with regard to using the EA to be confusing in a criterion that is a minimum requirement and questioned how this would be applied. It was suggested that either the term “preferably” should be removed (making it mandatory to use the EA) or the criterion should be optional instead of part of the minimum requirements.

- Would you recommend removing the term “preferably” from this minimum requirement? What would be the advantages/disadvantages of doing that in your opinion?

In the first part of the criterion, “*internal and external Quality Assurance is conducted in accordance with the ESG*”, several negative responses were registered due to interpreting the criterion to mean that both internal and external QA are necessary.

- Do you agree that re-wording the criterion to: “*Quality Assurance, be it internal or external, is conducted in accordance with the ESG*” would make it clearer? Do you have other suggestions to improve the clarity of the criterion?

- **Joint policies for the joint programme**

Minimum requirement: The HEIs involved have joint policies for admission, selection, supervision, monitoring, assessment and recognition procedures for the joint study programme (EQF 6,7,8).

Survey 2: 84.2% of respondents considered the joint policies as described in this criterion to be very suitable (56.1%) or quite suitable (28.1%). Agreeing on joint policies for procedures such as admission and selection of students is considered by many as “the essence” of a joint programme, and something that should be developed jointly and clearly established in the programme consortium agreement. It was also mentioned that this requirement already features for Erasmus Mundus Joint Masters and “even if it is not easy, it is feasible and it can really enhance the quality of the student experience”.

On the other hand, other respondents indicated that while this type of joint policies are desirable, in practice they often end up as “vague compromises” due to the difficulties to align different local/national specifications. It was suggested that the joint policies agreed on should have prevalence over the local/national policies in place in the participating universities in order to ensure the joint nature of the programme.

Not all respondents shared this view, however. A minority expressed the view that a joint programme should aim to expose students to different university cultures and practices and therefore not all policies should be the same in all the partner institutions. Another respondent indicated that what is important is not being joint but being of high quality.

Survey 3: Fulfilment of criterion: 83% yes; 17% no.

Discussion points:

The suitability of including a series of different elements in the criterion - admission, selection, supervision, monitoring, assessment and recognition procedures – was questioned, as it becomes an “all or nothing” option. In fact, of the 129 joint programmes that indicated compliance with this criterion, the details provided suggest that joint policies are not in place for all the procedures mentioned, meaning the criterion is not clearly expressed. It also

contrasts with the following criterion on access to services, where a list of examples is given rather than a list of (apparently) required elements.

- What would be your recommendation on how to word this criterion?
- Would having joint policies for some of the elements be enough or should all be in place to fulfil the criterion?
- What are the main barriers you can identify to fulfilling this criterion and how could they be addressed?

- **Transnational campus – access to services**

Minimum requirement: The joint programme provides enrolled students, regardless of their location, with seamless and free access to the participating HEI’s services such as, e.g. IT services, shared infrastructure and facilities, (online) library services, faculty development and support, academic guidance and psychological counselling, career advice/mentoring, alumni systems (EQF 6,7,8).

Survey 2: 93.5% of respondents considered it very suitable (64.7%) or quite suitable (28.8%).

Survey 3: 84% of the joint programmes indicate that they provide these services, with 16% answering no. However, in the open comments some limitations in the access to services were revealed.

Discussion points:

While the idea of access to services is unanimously welcomed, various issues arise with regard to the wording of the criteria and its possible interpretations. Several respondents question whether the intention is for all services of all participating HEIs to be available at all times to all enrolled students, as the way the criterion is expressed seems to suggest. They point out the difficulties that would entail; for example, it would require students to be enrolled in all the participating institutions for the duration of the joint programme whereas currently in many cases students are only formally enrolled in the coordinating institution and/or in the institutions where they are studying (either physically or digitally).

- Should the wording be changed to reflect the idea that these services should be available to students in the partner institutions where they are studying at any given time, be it in person or online?

The terms “seamless and free” access also gave rise to some observations. It was mentioned that students enrolled on joint programmes should have access to these services in the same conditions as all the other students enrolled in the institution, which may mean paying a fee for some services or complying with certain prerequisites.

- Do you agree with this or should the European Degree label require that students enrolled on joint programmes have special treatment with regard to these services?

Similarly, it was pointed out that the examples provided of different services can create confusion about exactly what services need to be offered with seamless and free access in order to comply with the criteria. This is perhaps more relevant given that in the previous criterion, a list of joint policies is provided not as examples but as, seemingly, a list of requisites.

- Should there be a list of services that students would need to have access to, or is it sufficient for students to have the same access to all available services as the rest of the students in any given institution?
- What evidence do you suggest could be used to validate compliance with this criterion?

- **Flexible and embedded student mobility arrangements**

Minimum requirement: The joint programme includes at least 1 period of student physical mobility at another partner institution of at least 30 ECTS (EQF 6,7).

Survey 2: 85.6% of respondents find it very suitable (68.3%) or quite suitable (17.3%).

Survey 3: 94% of the joint programmes fulfil this criterion, with only 9 programmes (6%) not including mandatory mobility of 30 ECTS (one semester).

Discussion points:

This section of the criteria is titled “Flexible and embedded student mobility”. The criterion includes the term “at least” twice, referring to the number of physical mobility periods (at least 1) and the duration of that mobility period (at least 30 ECTS). One mobility period of 30ECTS can seem a very low threshold for a joint programme.

- Do you think the minimum requirement should:
 - i) differentiate the length of the mandatory physical mobility between EQF levels 6 and 7? For example, while 30 ECTS would represent 50% of a one-year master’s programme, and 25% of a two-year master’s programme, in the case of joint programmes at bachelor level the minimum should be 60 ECTS so that it represents at least one third of the programme.
 - ii) require two mobility periods of 30 ECTS each to two different partner institutions participating in the joint programme?
- Should physical mobility only be mandatory (embedded) if adequate scholarships and accommodation are guaranteed?
- Should it be mandatory but include exceptions for students unable to participate in physical mobility?
- What should be the role of virtual and blended mobility?

For some, allowing the mobility period to include the possibility of virtual or blended mobility instead of only physical mobility would be more inclusive and respectful of students who, for whatever reason, are not able to undertake physical mobility. For others, virtual mobility is a way to promote a greener future. Other comments referred to the recent developments in the field of virtual exchange/virtual mobility/blended learning etc. and can be summarised by the following comment from one respondent: “An exclusive focus on physical mobility with fixed minimum ECTS/time requirements hampers innovation in delivery modes, and disrespects student-centred learning processes in which the learning outcomes should determine the appropriate mobility formats.”

Minimum requirement: The joint programme includes a total of at least 6 months of physical mobility at another partner institution (including secondment). The total of 6 months can be the sum of several shorter mobility periods (EQF 8).

Survey 2: In the case of physical mobility at doctoral level, 73,4% of respondents considered the criterion to be very suitable (50.4%) or quite suitable (23%). The observations made were of a similar nature as those for mobility at EQF levels 6 and 7 with regard to the need to include virtual and blended mobility, and to take into consideration the situation of students who are not able to undertake physical mobility. At doctoral level, a higher proportion of students have professional or family responsibilities and therefore may be more limited regarding physical mobility.

According to several respondents, the length of the mobility period at this level should be 12 months.

Finally, it was pointed out that “including secondment” could be understood to mean that secondment is a required part of the mobility period or that a secondment period can be counted as part of the 6 months of physical mobility. This should be clarified for the viability of the criterion.

Survey 3: Fulfilment of criterion: 58% yes; 42% no. However, of the 5 joint programmes that responded no, 3 did so due to not fully understanding the question, as 2 require a minimum of 12 months of physical mobility and 1 requires 6 consecutive months of physical mobility. The actual result is therefore 83% yes; 17% no.

Discussion points:

- In your opinion, what should be the minimum length of mobility for joint doctoral programmes? Please justify your answer.
- “*The joint programme includes a total of at least 6 months of physical mobility at another partner institution (this may include secondment).*” Does this wording make the criterion clearer? Should an explanation of exactly what is meant by secondment be included, or is the term sufficiently well understood?

Minimum requirement: In addition to physical mobility, the joint programme includes opportunities for doctoral candidates to participate in one or more of these activities at another partner institution: teaching activities, international events, international conferences, joint research publications with researchers from partner institutions (EQF 8).

Survey 2: 73.4% of respondents found this criterion to be very suitable (47.5%) or quite suitable (25.9%). However, more than half of the respondents stated that it should be an optional criterion rather than a minimal requirement as many of the suggested activities require funding and/or are subject to local or national regulations which means it is not feasible to offer them in all joint programmes.

There were concerns over how to measure compliance with the criterion as the expression “the joint programme includes opportunities for doctoral candidates to participate in” was considered rather vague. The availability of opportunities does not mean that the doctoral candidates will necessarily participate and benefit from them, so simply offering the opportunities should not be a qualifying criteria for the European degree label. However, to quantify successful participation in a minimum number of such “opportunities” would also be complex: for example, joint publications can take many months to get published, and success in joint research projects may depend on the timeline of external calls.

Survey 3: 100% fulfilment. Regarding the type of activities undertaken, joint research projects and participation in international events were the most cited.

Discussion points:

- Bearing in mind the opinions stated above, should this criterion be a minimum requirement or optional? Please explain your answer.
- If it were to remain a minimum requirement, is “including opportunities for” enough to qualify for a European degree label?
- How could fulfilment of this criteria be proven, given the complexity of providing timely evidence for some of the activities listed?

- **Multilingualism**

Minimum requirement: During the joint programme, each student is exposed to at least 2 different EU official languages (this may include students’ mother tongue/s), language classes excluded. Exposure to EU official languages can take place in active and/or passive use of the language(s), at any level in teaching and/or learning activities, examinations, research activities, professional or civic engagement activities and during mobility periods, including by going on mobility to a country where a different EU official language is predominantly used in daily life. Examples: A joint programme is offered in 2 different EU official languages; a joint programme is offered in 1 EU official language and students have the opportunity to go on mobility in a country where a different EU official language is predominantly used in daily life (EQF 6,7,8).

Survey 2: In this survey, the multilingualism criterion was divided into two parts. The first part – *During the joint programme, each student is exposed to at least 2 different EU official languages (this may include students’ mother tongue/s), language classes excluded.* - scored the lowest level of acceptance (64%) of all the minimum requirements with regard to the percentage of answers choosing very suitable (38,1%) or quite suitable (25.9%). However, the results should be considered alongside those of the second part of the criterion in which “exposure” is further explained. In this case, 76.2% of respondents indicated that this part of the criterion was very suitable (38.8%) or quite suitable (37.4%).

Survey 3: 90% of joint programmes indicated that they fulfil this criterion with 16 joint programmes (10%) responding negatively, mainly due to non-EU partners meaning that the other languages involved are not official EU languages.

Many respondents found the multilingualism criteria to be rather confusing and it is suggested that clearer wording (including the footnotes) is needed to ensure better understanding of the proposed measures. There were also several responses indicating that language classes should not be excluded as part of the “exposure to at least two different EU official languages” requirement. Another suggestion to modify the wording was “During the joint programme, each student is offered exposure to at least 2 different EU official languages”. This reflects the view that language learning should not be obligatory and indeed is not considered by some to be relevant for some disciplinary fields. Including language learning as part of the curriculum of joint programmes was questioned, with one respondent sharing the experience that if

language courses are not part of the curriculum, students do not attend but assigning ECTS to languages courses is often difficult as it detracts from other essential elements of the joint programmes. It was also mentioned that it is “inappropriate to place linguistic expectations on a joint programme”.

A recurring concern referred to the limitations this criterion seems to imply for joint programmes that involve institutions from two different countries that share a common language, such as Germany and Austria; and Belgium (Flanders) and the Netherlands. It was pointed out that mobility has impacts beyond language and should not be discounted because the same language is spoken.

There was a clear preference for the use of English as the language of instruction and academic activity, with several respondents stating that all transnational joint programmes should be taught in English to make them more attractive and accessible.

“Exposure” was considered to be a very vague term with little impact and difficult to measure. Indeed the situations described in the criterion are not considered sufficient to guarantee a desirable level of multilingualism in the view of some respondents. It was also pointed out that experience with languages other than English will vary from student to student, depending on their personal interests, previous experience and ability.

Discussion points:

This is an extremely complex and, indeed, politically sensitive issue to frame adequately as a criterion for a European degree label.

- Do you have any suggestions on how to modify this criterion?
- Should language classes be included?
- In its current form, “the student is exposed to”, are the outcomes sufficiently solid to warrant including multilingualism as one of the elements in being awarded a European degree label?
- How would this exposure be measured?

- **Innovative learning approaches**

Minimum requirement: The joint programme includes embedded interdisciplinary and/or intersectoral components using student-centred and/or challenge-based approaches (EQF 6,7,8).

Survey 2: This criterion was considered by 72.7% of respondents to be very suitable (41%) or quite suitable (31.7%). The observations made range from those who fully agree with this measure to those who state that although they agree that a label should award excellence and innovation in education, they “would argue against the EU prescribing the methodologies in order to strengthen the sustainability of the label and its criteria, as well as preserving the autonomy of the institutions in defining their approach to teaching and learning”. Another view is that while some joint programmes might benefit from this approach, there are others where it “has no sense at all and thus its application should not be mandatory for all”. In this sense, another respondent comments that innovative teaching methods are welcome “provided that a sound knowledge of the specific discipline is nonetheless guaranteed”.

Several respondents comment that the criterion is very vague - *“the joint programme includes embedded ...”* - and therefore difficult to implement and measure. Are we referring to a percentage of the programme? How would this be quantified?

Survey 3: 88% of the joint programmes indicate that they include these components and approaches, with 12% (18 programmes) responding negatively.

Discussion points:

- Do you consider this criterion to be a minimum requirement for a European degree label, or should it be optional? Please give reasons for your answer.
- Given the rather vague wording of the criterion *“the joint programme includes embedded interdisciplinary and/or intersectoral components...”*, how could this be measured to ensure compliance? What would be the threshold?

- **Graduate outcomes**

Minimum requirement: The joint programme has a system to monitor graduate outcomes. This system can be at the level of the programme or institutional level(s). If possible, the content is aligned to the survey content of EUROGRADUATE (EQF 6,7,8).

Survey 2: 65% of respondents considered this criterion to be very suitable (35.3%) or quite suitable (31.7%). The wording of the criterion was questioned, as including a sub-criterion that can be met "if possible" is not considered viable. What reasons or circumstances would be acceptable in the cases where it is not possible and how would this be decided? What is the added value with regard to the awarding of the label for those programmes that do align their system to EUROGRADUATE if exceptions are allowed?

The mention of EUROGRADUATE was commented on by several respondents, many of whom are not familiar with this survey and felt its use in the criterion was not advisable. One respondent indicated that *“the content of the EUROGRADUATE survey may change at any time and thus, have a direct and uncontrollable influence on the comparability and continuity of the criteria for the European Degree Label”*.

In other cases, it was signalled that monitoring graduate outcomes should be included as a criterion, but that in some cases institutional or national systems prescribe how this should be done. How to monitor graduate outcomes should therefore be discussed and agreed on in the planning phase of the joint programme and included in the consortium agreement.

Survey 3: 66 joint programmes (43%) indicated that they comply with this criterion although only 5 are aligned with EUROGRADUATE. The other 57% of the programmes responded that they do not have a system to monitor graduate outcomes.

Discussion points:

- *“If possible, the content is aligned to the survey content of EUROGRADUATE”* In your view, what is the value of including this as a “possibility”?

- The term “monitor graduate outcomes” does not appear to have been well understood by several respondents. Do you think the use of another term such as “graduate tracking” would be preferable?

- **Inclusiveness and sustainability**

Minimum requirement: The joint programme commits to wide participation through socially and geographically inclusive admission through tailored measures for all categories of disadvantaged students (EQF 6,7,8).

Survey 2: This criterion was considered by 87% of respondents to be very suitable (60.4%) or quite suitable (26.6%). One respondent stated “this criterion is just one of the European values that all joint programmes established in the European Union should align with”. Some respondents commented on the need for a clearer definition of “all categories of disadvantaged students”.

While there is wide support for this criterion, a recurring comment refers to the need for investment in adequate supporting structures, financial means and prepared personnel. Admitting disadvantaged students onto a joint programme is not enough if the supporting structures they need to successfully complete the programme are not available.

It was pointed out that the applicability of this criterion varies according to the joint programme in question. For example, a joint programme on oceanography which includes working at sea or diving cannot be open for all categories of disadvantaged students. Also, some concerns were expressed regarding the importance of academic excellence as the main criteria for admission, and the need to ensure that students selected through tailored measures are able to perform academically on a level with the rest of the cohort.

Finally, a connection was made between this criterion and criterion 7 – *Flexible and embedded student mobility*, to ensure that disadvantaged students are offered alternatives to physical mobility when necessary.

Survey 3: 68% comply with this criterion whereas 32% indicate a negative response.

Discussion points:

- How could “tailored measures for all categories of disadvantaged students” be quantified? If there are no measures in place for one “category” of disadvantaged students, would that mean the criterion has not been fulfilled?
- Should a European degree label require joint programmes to go beyond the inclusive measures to widen participation that are in place in their institutions?

Minimum requirement: The joint programme commits to respect the principles of the European Charter for Researchers and Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers and commits to the principles of the MSCA Green Charter (EQF 8).

Survey 2: 73.4% of respondents considered the criterion to be very suitable (54%) or quite suitable (19.4%). Among the observations made it was stated that all joint programmes at this

level (EQF 8) should adhere to the principles of the European Charter, although it was also pointed out that not all the principles are applicable in all countries. Also, some provisions of the MSCA Green Charter (the example given referred to the organisation of events with physical presence) are particularly difficult to enforce for HEIs in non-central locations.

Survey 3: 75% (9 joint doctoral programmes) fulfil this criterion.

Discussion points:

- Do you agree that this should be a minimum requirement for a joint doctoral programme to be awarded a European degree label?
- Beyond a statement of commitment to these principles, should any follow-up be carried out to ensure compliance, and if so, what would that be?

Optional criteria

Discussion points:

The draft criteria include 9 optional criteria, 6 of which are applicable to EQF 6,7 and 8; 2 to EQF 6 and 7; and 1 to EQF 8. How these optional criteria would be used is unclear. What is the benefit if a joint programme fulfils some or all of the optional criteria?

- How do you envisage the optional criteria being used in the award of the European degree label? Please consider the following options and explain any others you consider viable.
 - A multi-tier award where those programmes fulfilling only the minimum requirements are awarded the “standard” label, and those that comply with the optional criteria are awarded the “standard plus” label, or gold/silver/bronze level according to how many of the optional criteria they fulfil.
 - A catalogue of criteria of which applying programmes need to fulfil a pre-defined percentage, and where some criteria could be mandatory.
 - There is no difference in award between JP fulfilling only ‘mandatory requirements’ and those fulfilling both mandatory and optional requirements.

For each of the following optional criteria, please indicate:

- a) If you consider the criterion should be reclassified as a minimum requirement for the European degree label and why
- b) If you consider it should not be considered a criterion and why
- c) It requires rewording to clarify meaning – please indicate the proposed changes.
- d) How verification of fulfilment could be carried out.

Optional criterion 1: In addition to physical mobility, the joint programme includes additional formats of transnational learning activities with partner higher education institutions (e.g. online or blended, in the format of regular or intensive courses, summer/winter schools) (EQF 6,7)

Survey 2: 77.7% of respondents considered this optional criterion to be very suitable (46.8%) or quite suitable (30.9%), and the majority agreed with its status as an optional criterion. Several respondents recommended merging this optional criterion with the minimum requirement criterion 7 (periods of mandatory physical mobility) as a way to complement

physical mobility, or as an alternative for those unable to undertake physical mobility, thereby reinforcing the term “flexible” as mentioned in the description of the criterion. The additional formats of transnational learning mentioned were seen as a way to improve international interaction without raising costs for students.

While some respondents expressed a desire to maintain face to face teaching as the preferred method, particularly for programmes with field activities, laboratory activities, practical classes, etc., others felt that with the ongoing evolution of teaching and learning methods, it is important to include this type of formats in a transnational joint programme. It was, however, pointed out that some institutions need to comply with national regulations and requirements regarding online and blended learning.

Finally, the suggestion was made to change the wording of the criterion to: “In addition to physical mobility, the joint programme **offers** additional formats of transnational learning activities.”

Survey 3: Fulfilment of criterion: **45% (64 joint programmes) yes, 55% (79 joint programmes) no**

Optional criterion 2: The joint programme offers the possibility to take language classes so as to enhance the command of multiple European languages (EQF 6,7,8).

Survey 2: With regard to this optional criterion, 85.7% of respondents considered it to be very suitable (54%) or quite suitable (31.7%). Many of the observations referred to the fact that most universities offer language courses to all students, irrespective of the programme they are studying. Several references were made to the cost of these classes, which could be a barrier for some students. Another relevant element was the possible recognition of such courses, where the majority of comments expressed the opinion that they should be extracurricular or, at most, could be recognised as free electives if the joint programme makes provision for that. It was also mentioned that providing opportunities to learn multiple European languages should not be considered the responsibility of a joint programme any more than it is of any other programme offered in a European HEI.

Survey 3: Fulfilment of criterion: 61% yes, 39% no

Optional criterion 3: The joint programme supports future labour market needs and/or includes cooperation with businesses and sectors in its curriculum (EQF 6,7,8).

Survey 2: 79.1% of respondents considered this criterion to be very suitable (48.2%) or quite suitable (30.9%). Several respondents commented that this criterion refers to a basic element that should be part of all well-designed curricula and that all programmes should comply with it, not only European joint programmes. It was also mentioned that this criterion is part of the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes and as such should be obligatory, at least for EQF 6 and 7.

Several mentions were made of the fact that the relevance of this criterion depends to some extent on the field of study of the joint programme, and that the understanding of the terms “labour market” and “businesses and sectors” should be as broad as possible to cover the needs of careers in academia and basic research.

Survey 3: Fulfilment of criterion: 63% yes, 37% no.

Optional criterion 4: The joint programme provides opportunities for international professional internships/work-based learning recognised through the award of ECTS (EQF 6,7)

Survey 2: A total of 78,4% of respondents classified this criterion as very suitable (48.9%) or quite suitable (29.5%). The observations regarding this criterion included the opinion that the subject area of the joint programme affects its applicability, as in some fields it might be considered compulsory while in others, only recommended or even unnecessary. It was also commented that international internships are particularly suited to EQF level 7.

A clearer definition of what is meant by “international” was recommended – does it refer to a different country from the country of residence, or a different country from those where the joint programme takes place?

Several respondents referred to the need for these internships to include financial reimbursement to support students during their internship, as well as possible difficulties for students lacking communicative competence in the local language.

The criterion was considered positive as an optional criteria and it was pointed out that providing opportunities for internships does not mean all students following the programme should necessarily do an internship.

Survey 3: Fulfilment of criterion: 65% yes, 35% no.

Optional criterion 5: The joint programme includes a career development plan devised with the candidate and/or exposure to the non-academic sector (such as internships, seminars, networking) (EQF 8).

Survey 2: 66.9% of respondents considered this criterion to be very suitable (38.8%) or quite suitable (28.1%). In some cases, these services are offered at institutional level by a centralised service with specialised staff rather than at programme level. Individual candidate’s needs and interests play an important role here and including a CDP for all candidates would be complex within the framework of a joint programme at this level, especially if students are mobile.

Survey 3: Fulfilment of criterion: 75% yes, 25% no.

Optional criterion 6: The joint programme includes components and actions related to environmental sustainability and implements measures to minimise the environmental footprint of its activities (EQF 6,7,8)

Survey 2: The responses to this criterion indicate that 70.5% consider it to be very suitable (43.2%) or quite suitable (27.3%). It was pointed out by several respondents that environmental sustainability should be a focus in all programmes and therefore it should not be a determining factor in awarding the European degree label. Some respondents also mentioned that many measures related to environmental sustainability need to be implemented at institutional level rather than at programme level. There were also questions about how this could be implemented, and suggestions for guidelines on how to achieve it at

programme level. Finally, a significant number of respondents pointed out the inherent contradiction of a physical mobility requirement and at the same time the desire to reduce the environmental footprint of the programme's activities.

Survey 3: Fulfilment of criterion: 46% yes, 54% no.

Optional criterion 7: The joint programme includes components and actions related to the development of high level digital skills of students, it offers high quality digital education content, as well as assessment of student skills (EQF 6,7,8).

Survey 2: Optional criterion 7 was considered by 74.1% of respondents to be very suitable (38.1%) or quite suitable (36%). While respondents recognised the importance of digital skills, there were several concerns related to this criterion. Firstly, it was felt that the criterion was not clearly expressed. "High level" digital skills mean different things to different people and will also vary according to the nature of the programme – in some fields, digital skills come "by default" and applying digital tools is a basic part of the study programme. Also, the clarity of the expression "as well as assessment of student skills" was questioned. This could be interpreted as "as well as **digital** assessment of student skills" or "as well as assessment of students' **digital** skills". In this regard, if the latter meaning is understood, the reference to the need to assess students' skills is questioned in the sense that all student skills and competences should be assessed if they are part of the training objective of a curriculum.

In addition, the meaning of "high quality digital education content" is questioned. Does this refer to the use of digital teaching and/or working methodologies in the educational sector, or to students learning how to apply digital tools in their field of study and/or future professional life?

Other respondents indicated that the focus should not be on digital skills per se, but on connecting these skills to the contents of teaching activities and to the learning outcomes of the course. Digital skills should not be prioritised over the specific learning objectives of the programme.

Reference was also made to the need for institutional support to apply these measures as they can depend on expensive infrastructure and equipment which cannot be the sole responsibility of a joint programme. The possible inequalities caused by differences between the infrastructure and equipment available at different partner institutions within a joint programme were also mentioned.

Finally, as with the previous criterion, it was stated that digital skills are important in all higher education programmes and therefore should not be a distinguishing criterion for the award of a European degree label.

Survey 3: Fulfilment of criterion: 59% yes, 41% no.

Optional criterion 8: The joint programme offers the possibility for students to participate in activities promoting democratic values and addressing societal needs of the local community(ies), including volunteering, and to receive ECTS for it (EQF 6,7,8).

Survey 2: 59.7% of respondents considered this criterion to be either very suitable (30.2%) or quite suitable (29.5%), which represents the lowest score for all the proposed criteria.

Respondents recognise the importance of promoting democratic values and addressing societal needs but question the validity of assigning ECTS for taking part in such activities. Other forms of recognition such as open badges are suggested. Also, this is seen as an important issue for all higher education programmes and not one that should be used to define the quality of a transnational joint programme. The complexity of organising, managing and assessing this type of activities in an international context is mentioned.

Survey 3: Fulfilment of criterion: 25% yes, 75% no.

Optional criterion 9: The higher education institutions offering the joint study programme conducts joint promotion and awareness- raising activities to ensure visibility of the joint programme and provide the necessary information about it for students and other relevant stakeholders such as future employers (EQF 6,7,8).

Survey 2: In the case of this criterion, 83.5% of respondents considered it to be very suitable (50.4%) or quite suitable (33.1%). Several respondents indicated that promotion and awareness-raising activities give value to a joint programme and are indispensable. On the other hand, others believe that this type of activities are not always needed, or that all HEIs promote their programmes as a matter of course, making it moot to include this as a criterion for the award of a European degree label. Others request clarification of what exactly is meant by “joint promotion”.

Survey 3: Fulfilment of criterion: 75% yes, 25% no.

Annex 2: Report template for Interviews and Focus groups

WORK PACKAGE 2: TASK 2.3

Focus group/interview report template.

- **Date:**
- **Start time:**
- **End time:**
- **Modality (in person/ online):**
- **Facilitator(s):**
- **Rapporteur(s):**
- **Language of the session:**
- **Audio recording (yes/no):**
- **Transcription into English (yes/no):**
- **Attendees (name, role and institution):**
 - 1)
 - 2)
 - ...
- **Notable incidents during the focus group/interview: (if applicable)**
- **Main conclusions:**

(Please provide the main points expressed concerning the criteria covered in the focus group/interview, clearly indicating to which criterion each point refers).

Annex 3: Working document for Barcelona workshop 11-12/01/2024

This document is designed to guide the work on our final recommendations regarding the criteria during our workshop in Barcelona on 11-12th January. The page references made refer to the document summarising the outcomes of the interviews and focus groups. Deliverables 2.1 and 2.2 are also very relevant to our discussion.

For the majority of criteria, a proposal is made to facilitate the discussion during the workshop. A proposal written in **green** means that the criterion has not been changed. A proposal in **orange** means that the original text has been modified.

Initial considerations.

Added value of a European Degree (label)

- Is the European Degree (label) envisaged as an exclusive marker of quality or as something that could be more widely applied and inclusive?
- Are we looking for minimum thresholds, the lowest common denominator so that many existing programmes could be included or is it more a blueprint for the future, something more aspirational and exclusive, a “carrot” to encourage legislative changes in countries where barriers exist to, for example, the implementation of basic Bologna tools?

Evaluation criteria

- What position are we going to adopt regarding minimum requirements and optional criteria?
- If we include optional criteria, how would that work?
- Grading: non-compliance; partial compliance; full compliance?; Requiring at least partial compliance?; Do we allow for any non-compliance?

Purpose / focus of the criteria

- The criteria are, in general, directed towards the student experience in joint programmes. Do we think it could be positive to extend relevant criteria to include the staff involved in the programme? For example, in the case of the multilingualism criterion, should we include availability of language courses for participating staff (both academic and administrative) as a way to encourage multilingualism and therefore as a mark of quality of a JP?

SET ONE: PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

Related European Standards and Guidelines:

ESG 1.1 Policy for quality assurance

ESG 1.7 Information management

ESG 1.8 Public information

ESG 1.9 On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes

Related European Approach criteria:

EA 1. Eligibility

EA 8. Transparency and Documentation

EA 9. Quality Assurance

Criterion 1

Higher education institutions involved

- **Minimum requirement: The joint programme is jointly designed and delivered by at least 2 higher education institutions from at least 2 different EU Member States (EQF 6,7, 8)**

Jointly designed and delivered is accepted as a basic requirement for a joint programme. Most of the discussion centres around the level of “jointness” and how to prove this.

The **minimum number of HEIs** involved is less clear. There are two main options.

- 1) Maintain the criterion as it is, with 2 HEIs from 2 EU Member States. *Less complicated to set up and run a JP, more inclusive of currently existing JPs.*
- 2) Increase the minimum to 3, *thereby adding to multicultural/multilingual value, the “Europeanness” of the programme. Alignment with Erasmus Mundus criteria and many other EU programme requirements. An interesting take from Ghent: How to read this criterion together with the criterion on multilingualism? The multilingualism criterion rules out cooperation between HEIs from e.g. the Netherlands and Flanders or between HEIs from Austria and Germany. As such, minimum 3 HEIs would facilitate compliance with the multilingualism criterion for consortia in which institutions from countries with the same (national/regional) language participate.*

Some suggest having different criteria at different EQF levels – one at 6 & 7, and a different one for 8. In some cases a higher number of HEIs is suggested for 8, while others suggest a lower number at that level to preserve the concept of co-tutelle. (but are co-tutelle and a joint doctorate programme not different things?)

Proposal:

The joint programme is jointly designed and delivered by at least 3 higher education institutions from at least 3 different EU Member States (EQF 6,7, 8)

Criterion 2

Transnational joint degree delivery

- **Minimum requirement: The joint programme leads to the award of a joint degree (EQF 6,7,8).** *(page 6)*

Arguments are given in favour and against this criterion for well-known reasons and boil down to whether the purpose here is to use the ED (label) concept as a lever to “push” for the removal of legislative obstacles to joint degrees or whether we want to be more flexible given the current situation in many countries and not make it mandatory.

The outcomes of the focus groups and interviews show a clear preference for the former.

Proposal:

The joint programme leads to the award of a joint degree (EQF 6,7,8).

- **Minimum requirement: Dissertations are co-evaluated by supervisors or a committee with members from at least 2 different institutions located in 2 different countries (EQF 8).** *(page 12)*

In general, there is agreement with this criterion although many mentions are made of differences between institutional and national policy, and of HEI autonomy. The question of whether to include joint supervision does not have clear support. With regard to also applying co-evaluation of dissertations to EQF 7, this is seen more as an optional criterion than a minimum requirement.

Proposal:

Dissertations are co-evaluated by supervisors or a committee with members from at least 2 different institutions located in 2 different countries (EQF 8).

Dissertations are preferably co-evaluated by supervisors or a committee with members from at least 2 different institutions located in 2 different countries (EQF 7).

Criterion 4

Quality assurance arrangements

- **Minimum requirement: Internal and external Quality Assurance is conducted in accordance with the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG). The programme, the study field or the institutions are accredited/evaluated by an EQAR registered agency.**
- **If external quality assurance is required at programme level in the countries involved, the transnational programme should be accredited/evaluated preferably using the European approach for quality assurance of joint programmes (EA) (EQF 6,7,8).** *(page 23)*

In general terms, the majority of respondents are in favour of removing the term “preferably” despite the implications this would have for HEIs in some countries. This is done with a view to “pushing” changes in legislation in a similar fashion to the mandatory awarding of a joint degree.

Suggestion to combine the application for the European Approach with an application for a joint European degree (label): The advantage of combining both applications is that with the European Approach procedure, one already looks into all quality assurance aspects. Results might come in different forms, as is the case with an accreditation decision: Successful, conditional, failed. All combinations of outcomes are possible, e.g. the EA application might have been successful but the one for the joint European degree (label) not (or conditional).

Proposal:

Minimum requirement: Internal and external Quality Assurance is conducted in accordance with the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG). The programme, the study field or the institutions are accredited/evaluated by an EQAR registered agency.

If external quality assurance is required at programme level in the countries involved, the transnational programme should be accredited/evaluated using the European approach for quality assurance of joint programmes (EA) (EQF 6,7,8).

Criterion 10

Graduate outcomes

- **Minimum requirement: The joint programme has a system to monitor graduate outcomes. This system can be at the level of the programme or institutional**

level(s). If possible, the content is aligned to the survey content of
EUROGRADUATE (EQF 6,7,8). (page 57)

There is a majority opinion to replace “graduate outcomes” with “graduate tracking”. The mention of Eurograduate is favoured by some but questioned by others. By phrasing it as “if possible” it seems to be simply an attempt to widen knowledge of Eurograduate and promote its use.

Proposal:

Graduate tracking

- **Minimum requirement: The joint programme has a graduate tracking system. This system can be at the level of the programme or institutional level(s). If possible, the content is aligned to the survey content of EUROGRADUATE (EQF 6,7,8).**

Optional criteria 9 (EQF 6, 7 & 8): The higher education institutions offering the joint study programme conducts joint promotion and awareness-raising activities to ensure visibility of the joint programme and provide the necessary information about it for students and other relevant stakeholders such as future employers.

SET TWO: LEARNING EXPERIENCE

Related European Standards and Guidelines:

ESG 1.2 Design and approval of programmes

ESG 1.3 Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment

Related European Approach criteria:

EA 2. Learning Outcomes

EA 3. Study Programme

EA 5. Learning, Teaching and Assessment

Criterion 3

Transparency of the learning outcomes

- **Minimum requirement: The joint programme is described in ECTS (EQF 6,7).**
(page 16)

There is clear acceptance of this criterion, although many references are made to the difficulties still experienced with ECTS such as the different measurements of the workload and different grading scales.

Proposal:

The joint programme is described in ECTS (EQF 6,7).

- **Minimum requirement: A joint Diploma Supplement is issued to the student at the end of the joint study programme (EQF 6, 7).** *(page 20)*

There is general agreement with this criterion, although technical difficulties are cited as obstacles to its issue. Agreement with a common European template for the Joint diploma supplement for Joint programmes and the Europass model is mentioned as a possible template.

Proposal:

A joint Diploma Supplement is issued to the student on successful completion of the joint study programme (EQF 6, 7).

Criterion 7

Flexible and embedded student mobility arrangements

- **Minimum requirement: The joint programme includes at least 1 period of student physical mobility at another partner institution of at least 30 ECTS (EQF 6,7).** *(page 37)*

This criterion is generally accepted and mention is made of the unique value of physical mobility. Concerns regarding funding, accommodation and the need to make provisions for those unable to participate in physical mobility.

Rather than a number of ECTS, it is suggested that the minimum should be a percentage of the total number of credits of the JP. However, mobilities of less than a semester may be problematic for logistical reasons.

Proposal:

Minimum requirement: The joint programme includes at least 1 period of student physical mobility at another partner institution of at least 30 ECTS. Virtual mobility alternatives are available for justified cases where students are unable to travel. (EQF 6,7)

- **Minimum requirement: The joint programme includes a total of at least 6 months of physical mobility at another partner institution (including secondment). The total of 6 months can be the sum of several shorter mobility periods (EQF 8).** *(page 42)*

There are opposing views regarding the minimum length of the mobility – 12 months is frequently mentioned.

Proposal:

Minimum requirement: The joint programme includes a total of at least 6 months of physical mobility at another partner institution (this may include secondment). The total of 6 months can be the sum of several shorter mobility periods. Virtual mobility alternatives are available for justified cases where students are unable to travel. (EQF 8).

- **Minimum requirement: In addition to physical mobility, the joint programme includes opportunities for doctoral candidates to participate in one or more of these activities at another partner institution: teaching activities, international events, international conferences, joint research publications with researchers from partner institutions (EQF 8).** *(page 45)*

There is no clear majority here. Many mentions are made that it should be optional (if optional criteria are included). Concerns on how to measure it, although compliance would only need to show that “opportunities are included”. What does that mean? That recognition is given? That agreements exist? That funding is available?

Proposal: To make this criterion optional, (if we decide to include optional criteria).

Suggested addition to mobility criteria (former optional criterion):

Minimum requirement: In addition to physical mobility, the joint programme includes the possibility to participate in additional formats of transnational learning activities with partner higher education institutions (e.g. online or blended, in the format of regular or intensive courses, summer/winter schools). (EQF 6,7 & 8)

Criterion 8

Multilingualism

- **Minimum requirement: During the joint programme, each student is exposed to at least 2 different EU official languages (this may include students’ mother**

tongue/s), language classes excluded. Exposure to EU official languages can take place in active and/or passive use of the language(s), at any level in teaching and/or learning activities, examinations, research activities, professional or civic engagement activities and during mobility periods, including by going on mobility to a country where a different EU official language is predominantly used in daily life. Examples: A joint programme is offered in 2 different EU official languages; a joint programme is offered in 1 EU official language and students have the opportunity to go on mobility in a country where a different EU official language is predominantly used in daily life (EQF 6,7,8). *(page 47)*

There are many comments on the need to modify this criterion. Many do not agree with excluding language classes from the criterion, and stress the need to award ECTS for language courses (as transversal skills) to incentivise participation. Others believe language courses should be offered but as an option for students, not as an obligation, and suggest incorporating optional criteria

Proposal:

- **Minimum requirement: During the joint programme, each student is exposed to at least 2 different EU official languages (this may include students' mother tongue/s). The joint programme offers the possibility to take language classes so as to enhance the command of multiple European official languages, although exposure to EU languages can take place in active and/or passive use of the language(s), at any level in teaching and/or learning activities, examinations, research activities, professional or civic engagement activities and during mobility periods, including by going on mobility to a country where a different EU official language is predominantly used in daily life. Examples: A joint programme is offered in 2 different EU official languages; a joint programme is offered in 1 EU official language and students have the opportunity to go on mobility in a country where a different EU official language is predominantly used in daily life (EQF 6,7,8).**

Criterion 9

Innovative learning approaches

- **Minimum requirement: The joint programme includes embedded interdisciplinary and/or intersectoral components using student-centred and/or challenge-based approaches (EQF 6,7,8). *(page 52)***

Although there are comments about exactly what is meant by “innovative”, it seems logical to leave the criterion loosely defined so that it can be adapted to different learning environments and

is not too prescriptive. Many agree that this is the future of education and this is a way of pointing people in the right direction. Note that it only says: “**includes embedded components**”, not that the whole programme has to be interdisciplinary/intersectoral. ESGs already prescribe student-centred approaches. Difference at doctoral level??

Proposal:

Innovative learning approaches and connection with labour market

- **Minimum requirement: The joint programme includes embedded interdisciplinary and/or intersectoral components using student-centred and/or challenge-based approaches (EQF 6,7,8).**
- **Minimum requirement: The joint programme supports future labour market needs and/or includes cooperation with businesses and sectors in its curriculum. (former optional criteria 3)**
- **Minimum requirement: The joint programme provides opportunities for international professional internships/work-based learning, recognised WHERE POSSIBLE through the award of ECTS. (former optional criteria 4; adding “where possible”)**

OPTIONAL CRITERIA

N:B. How these criteria will be dealt with depends on our decision regarding whether or not to have optional criteria.

Optional criteria 1 (EQF 6 & 7): In addition to physical mobility, the joint programme includes additional formats of transnational learning activities with partner higher education institutions (e.g. online or blended, in the format of regular or intensive courses, summer/winter schools).

Proposal to add to the mobility criterion.

Optional criteria 2 (EQF 6,7 & 8): The joint programme offers the possibility to take language classes so as to enhance the command of multiple European languages.

Combine with minimum requirement on multilingualism.

Optional criteria 3 (EQF 6, 7 & 8): The joint programme supports future labour market needs and/or includes cooperation with businesses and sectors in its curriculum.

One of several criteria referring to “intersectoralness”, employability, cooperation with future employers of all kinds. Would be better to group these either in one criterion or in a set of criteria. (minimum requirement on innovative learning)

Optional criteria 4 (EQF 6 & 7): The joint programme provides opportunities for international professional internships/work-based learning recognised through the award of ECTS.

Move to innovative learning minimum requirement. Awarding of ECTS problematic (e.g. paid internships).

Optional criteria 5 (EQF 8): The joint programme includes a career development plan devised with the candidate and/or exposure to the non-academic sector (such as internships, seminars, networking).

Extend to EQF 7? Make minimum requirement? Remove second part (already covered)?

Optional criteria 6 (EQF 6, 7 & 8): The joint programme includes components and actions related to environmental sustainability and implements measures to minimise the environmental footprint of its activities.

Add to minimum requirement on inclusiveness and sustainability?

Optional criteria 7 (EQF 6, 7 & 8): The joint programme includes components and actions related to the development of high level digital skills of students, it offers high quality digital education content, as well as assessment of student skills.

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Optional criteria 8 (EQF 6, 7 & 8): The joint programme offers the possibility for students to participate in activities promoting democratic values and addressing societal needs of the local community(ies), including volunteering, and to receive ECTS for it.

SET 3: STUDENT SUPPORT

Related European Standards and Guidelines:

ESG 1.4 Student admission, progression, recognition and certification

ESG 1.5 Teaching staff

ESG 1.6 Learning resources and student support

Related European Approach criteria:

EA 6. Student Support

EA 7. Resources

Criterion 5

Joint policies for the joint programme

- **Minimum requirement: The HEIs involved have joint policies for admission, selection, supervision, monitoring, assessment and recognition procedures for the joint study programme (EQF 6,7,8).** (page 27)

The majority agree that joint policies should be a minimum requirement for a JP.

It is pointed out that joint policies don't necessarily mean uniformity – it can refer simply to a jointly agreed way to do things, e.g. assessment. Each partner uses their own system but then a jointly agreed conversion scale is used.

Clarification is needed of some of the terms: admission – selection - supervision – monitoring - assessment and recognition procedures? What definitions can we give to make sure everyone understands each term the same way?

- Is it necessary to comply with all these elements? Are any missing?

Proposal: Minimum requirement: The HEIs involved have joint policies for selection, admission, supervision, monitoring, assessment and recognition procedures for the joint study programme (EQF 6,7,8).

Criterion 6

Transnational campus -access to services

- **Minimum requirement: The joint programme provides enrolled students, regardless of their location, with seamless and free access to the participating HEI's services such as, e.g. IT services, shared infrastructure and facilities, (online) library services, faculty development and support, academic guidance and psychological counselling, career advice/mentoring, alumni systems (EQF 6,7,8). (page 32)**

General agreement with the need for access to services. There are many mentions of technical difficulties for access to services for students not physically present and therefore not necessarily registered in the HEI. Is it necessary to give remote access to all services to all students at all times? Also the term “free” is challenged – the preferred concept is that access is under the same conditions as for local students.

Access is only mentioned for students but faculty development and support services are included in the list – why not also specify access to services for all teaching staff involved in the JP?

Proposal:

Minimum requirement: The services provided by the participating HEIs, such as IT services, shared infrastructure and facilities, (online) library services, faculty development and support, academic guidance and psychological counselling, career advice/mentoring and alumni systems, are made available to students and teaching staff participating in the joint programme under the same conditions as to local students and staff. (EQF 6,7,8)

Criterion 11

Inclusiveness and sustainability

- **Minimum requirement: The joint programme commits to wide participation through socially and geographically inclusive admission through tailored measures for all categories of disadvantaged students (EQF 6,7,8). (page 60)**

This criterion gave rise to a lot of issues. While it is generally acknowledged that inclusiveness is important and is a European value that should be respected, several concerns are raised:

- What good is inclusive admission without the necessary support services once admitted to the programme?
- Giving suitable support to some types of disadvantaged students require investment in infrastructures and funding for grants etc. This should not be a responsibility of the JP.
- “All categories” - too broad and expecting too much.
- What are tailored measures and how can these be measured? What would be the minimum expected to qualify for this criterion?

Proposal:

Minimum requirement: The joint programme commits to wide participation through tailored measures to support disadvantaged students. (EQF 6,7,8).

Optional criterion added here as minimum requirement:

Minimum requirement: The joint programme includes components and actions related to environmental sustainability and implements measures to minimise the environmental footprint of its activities. (EQF 6,7 & 8)

- **Minimum requirement: The joint programme commits to respect the principles of the European Charter for Researchers and Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers and commits to the principles of the MSCA Green Charter (EQF 8).** *(page 63)*

This criterion is generally accepted.

Proposal:

Minimum requirement: The joint programme commits to respect the principles of the European Charter for Researchers and Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers and commits to the principles of the MSCA Green Charter (EQF 8).