



European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes

Vienna, 09.04.2025

European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes





European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes

A framework to *streamline* external QA of Joint Programmes across the European Higher Education Area

European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes

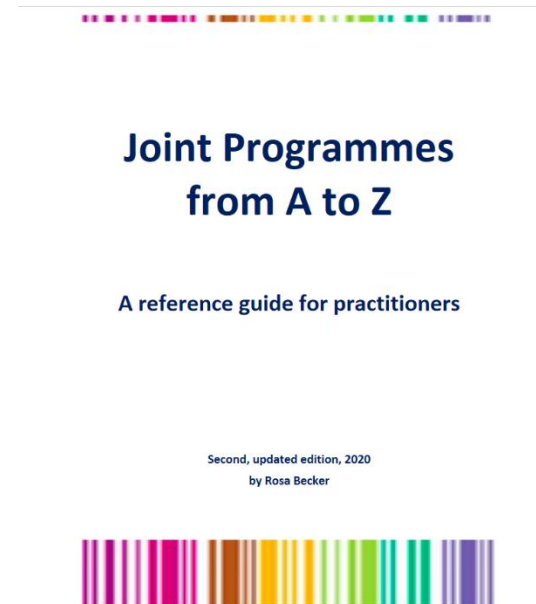
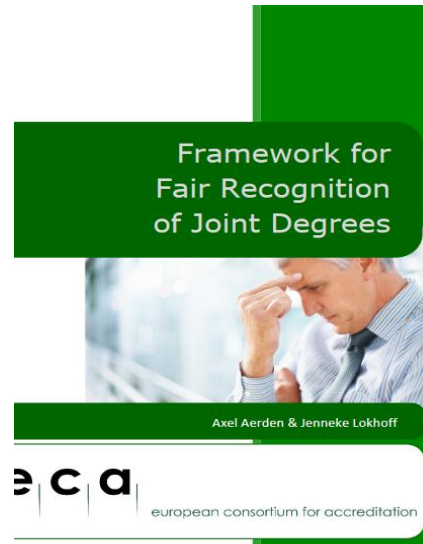
Why Was It Developed?

To make things easier – To solve problems!

- Diversified requirements for external QA - multiple national procedures for joint programmes – mapping of various standards & requirements – view on parts & pieces but not on the whole joint programme
- Consequence: Duplication, high costs, and bureaucracy
- Solution: A single QA procedure recognized across the EHEA



European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes



European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes



Who Developed It? Where did it start?

- Bologna Ministerial Communiqués in Bucharest 2012
 - "[...] We encourage higher education institutions to further develop joint programmes and degrees as part of a wider EHEA approach. *We will examine national rules and practices relating to joint programmes and degrees as a way to dismantle obstacles to cooperation and mobility embedded in national contexts. [...]*"
 - [...] in particular, we will aim to *recognise quality assurance decisions of EQAR* -registered agencies on joint and double degree programmes [...].
 - *Mandate to develop a "European Approach"*
 - *Handled by two working groups: Structural Reforms and Internationalisation/Mobility*

European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes

AQ



- Endorsed with the Bologna Ministerial Communiqués in Yerevan 2015, May 20215

“[...] I. **Policy measures adopted**

- the revised Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)
- *the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes*
- the revised ECTS Users’ Guide, as an official EHEA document [...]”



European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes



- Bologna Ministerial Communiqués in Tirana 2024, May 2024

"[...] The application of the ESG promotes trust and transparency within and between higher education systems and facilitates accountability and enhancement. To keep them in line with ongoing developments, challenges and expectations, we invite the authors⁵ of the ESG to propose a revised version by 2026 to the BFUG, to be adopted by us at our 2027 Ministerial conference, as well as an adjustment, where required, of the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes. [...]"



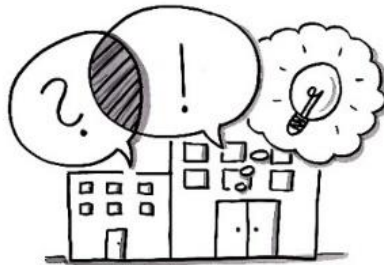
European Approach – Key idea



European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes

October 2014

approved by EHEA ministers in May 2015



Joint programmes are a hallmark of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). They are set up to enhance the mobility of students and staff, to facilitate mutual learning and cooperation opportunities and to create programmes of excellence. They offer a genuine European learning experience to students. Joint degrees express the “jointness” also in the awarding of the degree.

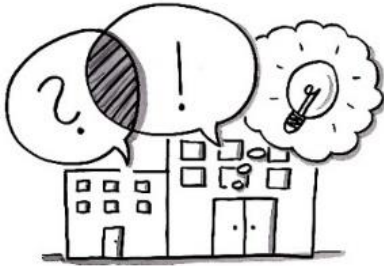
The present European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes has been developed to ease external quality assurance of these programmes. In particular, it will:

- dismantle an important obstacle to the development of joint programmes by setting standards for these programmes that are based on the agreed tools of the EHEA, without applying additional national criteria, and
- facilitate integrated approaches to quality assurance of joint programmes that genuinely reflect and mirror their joint character.

The EHEA is characterised by a diversity of approaches to external QA, including accreditation, evaluation or audit at the level of study programmes and/or institutions. While responding to the needs and requirements of their respective context, these different approaches find their “common denominator” in the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG).

TIPP: <https://impea.eu/understanding-ea/>

European Approach - Core Principles



“Joint programmes” are understood as an integrated curriculum coordinated and offered jointly by different higher education institutions from EHEA countries¹, and leading to double/multiple degrees² or a joint degree³.

- For joint programmes involving at least two EHEA countries (or beyond)
- National legislation must allow the use of the European Approach & the development & implementation of joint programmes (not yet everywhere ...)
- Agreed methodology! One agency / recognition of decisions taken
 - Common terms - common terminology

1. This proposal relates only to joint programmes offered jointly by higher education institutions from two or more countries, and does not address the quality assurance of programmes delivered jointly by different institutions from a single country.
2. Separate degrees awarded by higher education institutions offering the joint programme attesting the successful completion of this programme. (If two degrees are awarded by two institutions, this is a 'double degree').
3. A single document awarded by higher education institutions offering the joint programme and nationally acknowledged as the recognised award of the joint programme.

EHEA Tools - European Approach for Quality Assurance



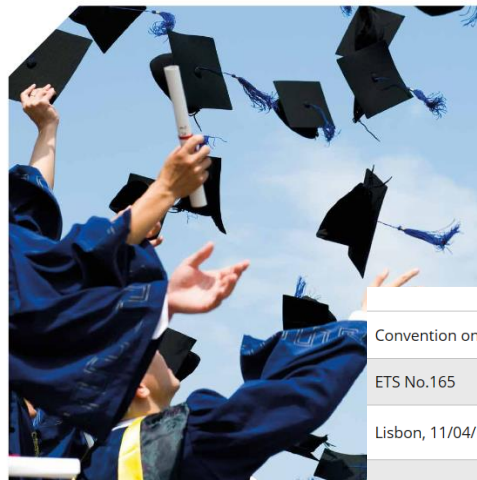
- Qualification Framework for the European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA)
- Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the EHEA (ESG)
- European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS)
- Lisbon Recognition Convention
- Consideration of specifics of joint programs - e.g. cooperation agreements, joint implementation



EHEA Tools - European Approach for Quality Assurance

**ESG
2015**

ECTS Users' Guide



Second cycle qualification

Qualifications that signify completion of the **second cycle** are awarded to students who:

- have demonstrated knowledge and understanding that is founded upon and extends and/or enhances that typically associated with the first cycle, and that provides a basis or opportunity for originality in developing and/or applying ideas, often within a research context;
- can apply their knowledge and understanding, and problem solving abilities in new or unfamiliar environments within broader (or multidisciplinary) contexts related to their field of study;
- have the ability to integrate knowledge and handle complexity, and formulate judgments with incomplete or limited information, but that include reflecting on social and ethical responsibilities linked to the application of their knowledge and judgments;
- can communicate their conclusions, and the knowledge and rationale underpinning these, to specialist and non-specialist audiences clearly and unambiguously;
- have the learning skills to allow them to continue to study in a manner that may be largely self-directed or

Typically include 90-120 ECTS credits, with a minimum of 60 credits at the level of the 2nd cycle



Standards and Guidelines for in the European High

Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region

Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region

ETS No.165

Lisbon, 11/04/1997 - Special conditions of opening for signature

01/02/1999 - 5 Ratifications including 3 member States of the Council of Europe and/or the UNESCO Europe Region.



Application - European Approach for Quality Assurance

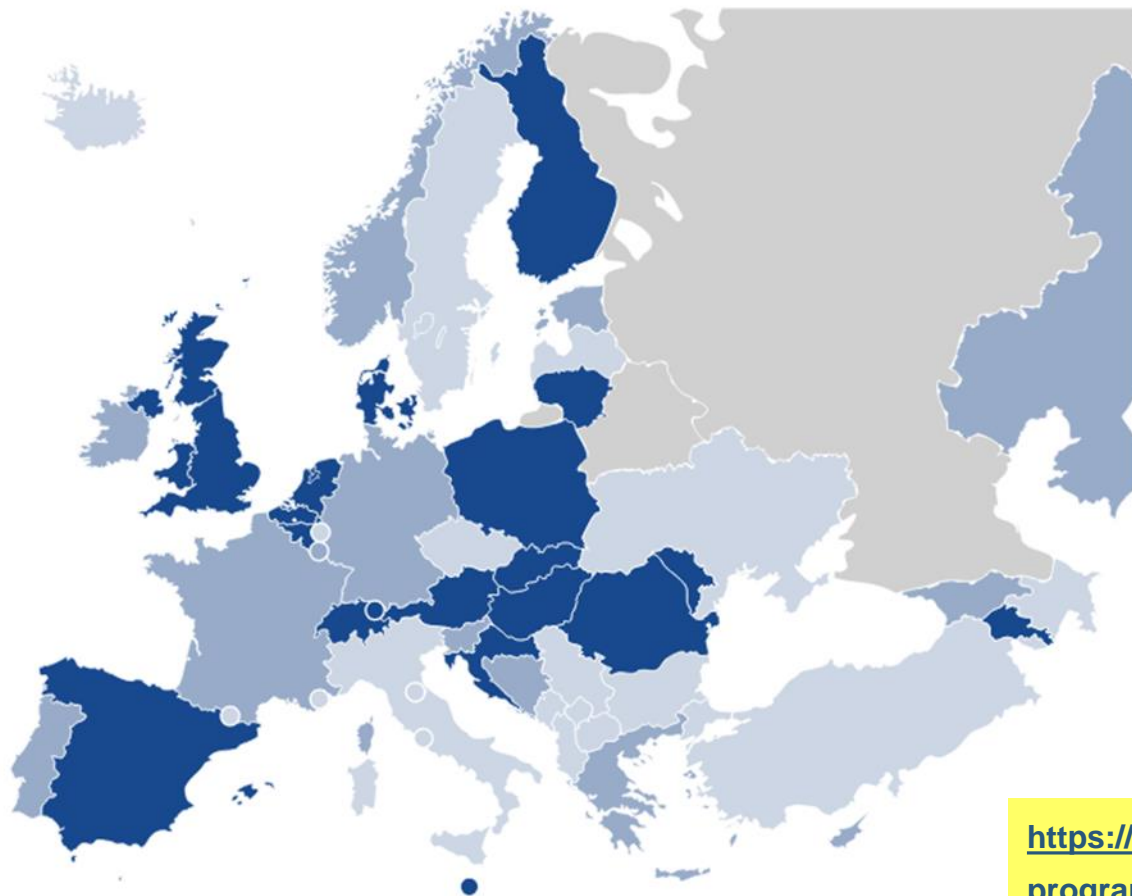


European Approach is an external quality assurance procedure for a joint programme.

The focus is not on parts of the consortium partners, but on the joint programme as a whole.

Consortia can choose an external quality assurance agency registered in EQAR

Decision made by one QAA should be recognised/enforced in all countries where the joint programme is offered.



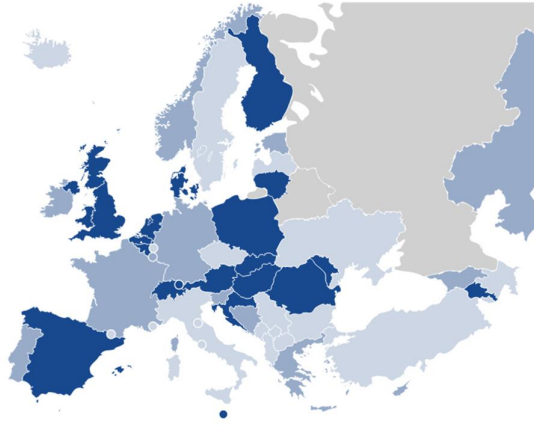
... EHEA countries introduced their own definitions of a joint programme. ... European Approach is still constrained by individual EHEA countries' specific eligibility requirements.. ...
 ... EQAR's knowledge base:

<https://www.eqar.eu/kb/joint-programmes/national-implementation/>

European Approach available to all higher education institutions

European Approach available to some higher education institutions or only under specific conditions

European Approach not available to higher education institutions



Knowledge Base- European Approach for Quality Assurance



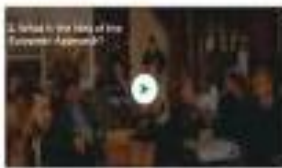
<https://www.eqar.eu/kb/joint-programmes/>



<https://impea.eu/>

<https://impea.eu/guide-for-qa-procedure/>

What is European Approach?
The European Approach to Quality Assurance of Higher Education (EQUIS) is a quality assurance system for higher education institutions in Europe. It was established in 2008 and is part of the European Quality Assurance Standard (EFMD EQUIS).



<https://impea.eu/guide-for-self-evaluation-report/>

Procedure - European Approach for Quality Assurance

0. Consortium seeks an EQAR-registered QA agency

1. Self-Evaluation Report [ESG 2.3]

2. Review Panel [ESG 2.3 & 2.4] – *add Experience with HEI systems of cooperation partners, language skills, experience with joint programmes*

3. Site Visit [ESG 2.3] – *Interviews with representatives of all cooperation partners at one location*

4. Review Report [ESG 2.3 & 2.6]

5. Formal Outcomes and Decision [ESG 2.5] – *six years, recognised and entered into force in all participating countries*

6. Appeals [ESG 2.7]

7. Reporting [ESG 2.6]

8. Follow-up [ESG 2.3]

9. Periodicity [ESG 1.10]

Standards for *Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes* in the EHEA

Standard 1	Eligibility (1.1 –1.3) <i>1.1 Status, official recognition – HS</i> <i>1.2 Joint development/implementation</i> <i>1.3 Cooperation agreement, responsibilities, degrees giving & awarding, admission & assessment & examination organisation, quality assurance, financing, mobilities,</i>
Standard 2	Learning Outcomes (2.1 –2.4)
Standard 3	Study Programmes (3.1 – 3.3)
Standard 4	Admission and Recognition (4.1 – 4.2)
Standard 5	Learning, Teaching and Assessment (5.1 – 5.2)
Standard 6	Student Support
Standard 7	Resources (7.1 – 7.2)
Standard 8	Transparency and Documentation
Standard 9	Internal Quality Assurance (ESG 1.1 + Teil 1)

Learning, ESG 1.1 Policy for Quality Assurance; [Design and approval of programmes; Student-centered Teaching and Assessment; Student Admission, Progression Recognition and Certification; Teaching staff; Learning resources an student support; Information Management; Public Information; On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes; Cyclical External Quality Assurance]

European Approach for Quality Assurance – Closing Thoughts



- The European Approach supports the development & implementation of joint programmes & cooperation across borders by simplifying (external) quality assurance
- The European Approach is a methodology to facilitate quality assurance of joint programmes - a single external QA procedure:
 - Only one EQAR registered QA agency needs to carry out the evaluation.
 - The European Approach is fully based on these common EHEA tools.
 - The European Approach focuses on programme quality rather than on national legal or administrative requirements.
- The European Approach is a trust-based approach: fostering mutual trust in national QA agencies across the EHEA.

Background Information

The European Higher Education Area in 2024: Bologna Process Implementation Report ", EHEA Ministerial Conference 2024, May 2024 ⇒ Chapter 2.3.5. The European Approach to the Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes in the EHEA page 87ff

<https://ehea.info/Download/02.%20the-european-higher-education-area-in-2024-EC0224018ENN.pdf>

EHEA Ministerial Conference, Bucharest 2012 (- Bucharest Communiqué, May 2012

https://ehea.info/Upload/document/ministerial_declarations/Bucharest_Communique_2012_610673.pdf)

EHEA Ministerial Conference, Yerevan 2015 (- Yerevan Communiqué, May 2015

https://ehea.info/media.ehea.info/file/2015_Yerevan/70/7/YerevanCommuniqueFinal_613707.pdf)

EHEA Ministerial Conference, Paris 2018 (- Paris Communiqué, May 2018 -

https://ehea.info/Upload/document/ministerial_declarations/EHEAParis2018_Communique_final_952771.pdf)

EHEA Ministerial Conference, Tirana 2024 (- Tirana Communiqué, May 2024 -

<https://ehea.info/Immagini/Tirana-Communique.pdf>)

Points of Interaction / Distinction



[Erasmus Mundus Design Measures \(EMDM\) | Erasmus+ \(europa.eu\)](#)

... They support the design of high-level and integrated study programmes, at master level. Joint programmes are designed and delivered by an international partnership of HEIs. Additionally, they may involve other educational and/or non-educational partners with specific expertise and interest in the area of study.

[Erasmus Mundus Joint Masters | Erasmus+ \(europa.eu\)](#)

.... EMJM are high-level and integrated study programmes, at master level. They are designed and delivered by an international partnership of higher education institutions (HEI). They involve at least three HEI from three different countries, of which at least two must be EU Member States and third countries associated to the Programme (previously called Programme Countries). By supporting these jointly recognised Master degrees, the EU aims at fostering excellence and internationalisation of the participating institutions. There are also scholarships for students to take part in these prestigious programmes; the masters themselves offer them to the best-ranked applicants worldwide.

[European Universities initiative | European Education Area \(europa.eu\)](#)

.... European Universities are transnational alliances that will lead the way towards the universities of the future, promoting European values and identity, and revolutionising the quality and competitiveness of European higher education.



Questions?



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