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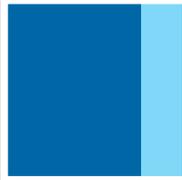
Yerevan State University, Yerevan, Armenia

**Comparability, Transparency,
Accreditation:**

**Magic Words for a Successful
Internationalization of HE**

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University of Genoa



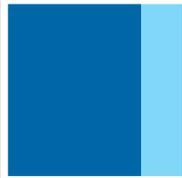


Aim of the presentation

Identification and analysis of fundamental conditions for the international recognition of Higher Education (HE) at least at European level.

Topics

- a) Comparability
- b) Transparency
- c) Accreditation



The context

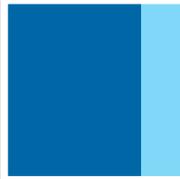
The **internationalisation process** has evolved in response to several trends.

- First, as world economies become increasingly inter-connected, **international skills** have become ever more important for operating successfully on a global scale.
- Another significant trend relates to the profound changes in the organisation and structure of national higher education systems to improve their **inter-operability**. This phenomenon has been most evident in Europe with the **Bologna Process**.

The Bologna process

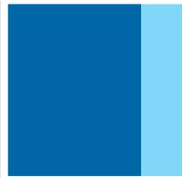
The Bologna Process aimed at establishing a European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and promoting the European system of higher education (HE) worldwide through:

- a system of easily readable and **comparable** degrees based on a common degree structure;
- enhancing **transparency** and facilitating academic and professional recognition of HE qualifications, through the establishment of the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS), and the Diploma Supplement.



Consequently, **comparability** and **transparency** of SPs can be considered the fundamental conditions for the international recognition of HE, at least at European level.

But, **what are the conditions the SPs have to fulfil in order to be considered ‘comparable’ and ‘transparent’?**

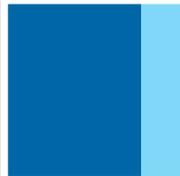


Comparability of study programmes

Of course, in order to be comparable at European level, SPs must have comparable **duration**.

At this regard, the Bologna process suggests an organization of the SPs in three main cycles (Bachelor, Master, Doctorate), each one consistent with the number of ECTS credits established in the Bologna declaration.

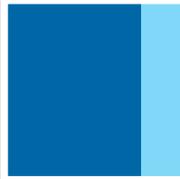
But, a comparable duration is not sufficient to guarantee the comparability of SPs.



Student-centred study programmes

In order to be comparable, first SPs must have comparable **'learning outcomes'**, i.e. *“statements of what a learner knows, understands and is able to do on completion of a learning process”* according to the definition of the EQF for LLL.

The requirement of comparable learning outcomes requires a **drastic change in the design of SPs.**



In the new SPs, **the focus is no more on what a student has been taught, but on what a student has learned and is able to do.** Therefore, SPs leading to a bachelor or master degree are no longer to be described and planned solely according to their content, but mainly according to the learning outcomes to be achieved by students during the educational process.

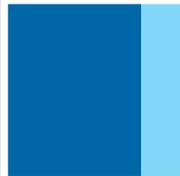
At present, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are undergoing a transformation process. The traditional ‘input-based’, ‘staff-/centred’ approach is slowly giving way to an ‘output-based’, ‘student-/centred’ approach, which takes the student as the centre of the teaching and learning process.

Level of learning outcomes

Furthermore, the **learning outcomes have to be adequate to the reference cycle (I, II or III) of the SP.**

From the European perspective, an important step in constructing the EHEA has been the development of an agreed set of general 'descriptors' to outline the essential components of any SP that leads to the completion of a Bologna cycle.

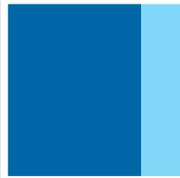
These are known as the **Dublin Descriptors**. They form the backbone of the **Qualifications Framework for the EHEA (QF for EHEA)**.



Besides the QF for EHEA, the European Union has established a **European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning** (EQF for LLL), which has eight levels, covering learning achievements at all educational levels.

As far as HE is concerned, the top three levels (i.e. level 6, 7 and 8) in this framework are compatible with the three cycles included in the QF for EHEA.

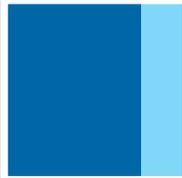
The Dublin Descriptors/EQF descriptors form general reference points at the European level in which any specific SP has to be situated.



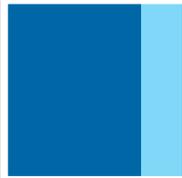
Quality and Quality Assurance of Study Programmes

In order to be comparable, SPs must also **assure their capacity to achieve the established learning outcomes** or, in other words, assure the quality of the educational service provided.

Quality assurance (QA) is the instrument to make SPs' quality transparent and trustworthy for all the stakeholders, students and employers first.



With **'SP quality assurance'** we intend *“the whole of the activities (processes) for the management of the educational service aimed at achieving the established educational objectives and then at ‘ensuring trust’ in meeting the quality requirements to all the stakeholders”*.

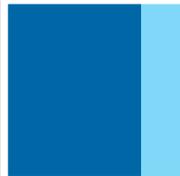


Today, the definition of a suitable internal QA system can rely on the **standards and guidelines for internal QA** established in the first part of the document *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* (ESG), adopted by the European Ministers of Education in the Bergen meeting on May 2005 and revised in the Yerevan meeting on May 2015.

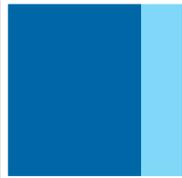
Transparency of study programmes

ECTS and Diploma Supplement are the main instruments developed by the Bologna process in order to promote transparency of SPs.

However, transparency of SPs requires also a **complete, clear, updated and easily available documentation of the SPs' characteristics** (educational objectives, educational process, available resources, results of the educational process, management system), in other words, **of the QA of SPs.**



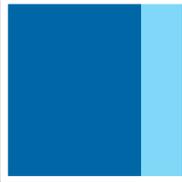
The availability of the documentation of the QA of SPs is **necessary in order to make possible the comparison of SPs and to 'ensure trust' in their capacity to achieve the established educational objectives**, making possible the formulation of an informed judgment on the SPs' quality by all the parties interested in the educational service provided.



The availability of the documentation of the QA of SPs fulfils a **requirement established by the ESG**, (Part 1 - 1.7 Public information).

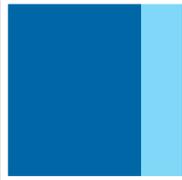
It constitutes a **powerful incentive to the improvement of SPs' quality** (as a matter of fact, when a SP is required to document its quality, in case of bad quality it is also stimulated to adopt the opportune actions for its improvement).

It is **necessary in any quality assessment and accreditation process.**



Information and data to be documented should fulfil **specific characteristics directly connected with the needs of transparency and comparability:**

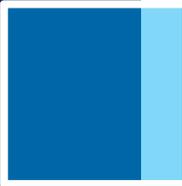
- they should have a simple structure and be drawn up in a short and essential form, according to drawing-up modes (extension, language, reading format) homogeneous at national (and international) level, and
- should be easily accessible on the net, today the most common and used mean to get information on everything, SPs included.



Accreditation of study programmes

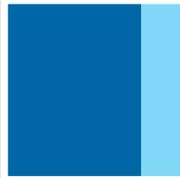
In HE, '**accreditation**' means the procedure according to which a recognised body attests formally the fulfilment of pre-definite standards or quantitative and/or qualitative requirements.

Today, accreditation is considered an essential tool not only to promote the recognition of qualifications issued in different countries, but also the quality of SPs.



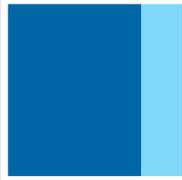
Accreditation has many 'values'. Those connected to international recognition of SPs can be listed as follows:

- it encourages confidence that an institution's or SP's presentation of the education it provides is fair and accurate.
- It assures that a neutral, external party has reviewed the quality of education provided and has found it to be satisfactory.
- It confirms that institutions and SPs have processes in place to meet changes in thinking and expectations.
- It assists with transfer of credits among institutions or admission to graduate school.



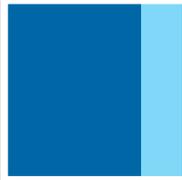
In order of the international recognition of the accreditations, **also the accrediting agencies should be internationally recognized.**

The **European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR)** is a register of such agencies, including those that have demonstrated their substantial compliance with the common set of principles for QA laid down laid down in the ESG.



Another important condition for a successful internationalization of HE is that **accreditation procedures should assess not only the presence of an effective QA system, but also the consistency of the SP learning outcomes with those shared at international level.**

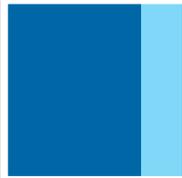
A good example of accreditation procedure that fulfil these requirements is the EUR-ACE system of accreditation of engineering SPs.



EUR-ACE system of accreditation of engineering study programmes

EUR-ACE (EUROpean ACcredited Engineer) is the label awarded to engineering SPs at Bachelor and Master level, listed by the European Commission among the ‘European Quality labels’.

The EUR-ACE label is run by the European Network for Accreditation of Engineering Education – ENAEE (www.enaee.eu).

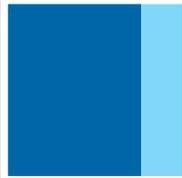


Wider objective of ENAEE is the **mutual recognition of engineering qualifications awarded by accredited SPs.**

Currently ENAEE has 17 full members and 5 associate members.

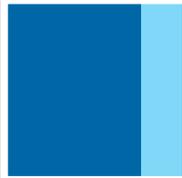
The agencies authorized to award the EUR-ACE label are 13.

The SPs accredited are more than 1.600, not only in Europe.



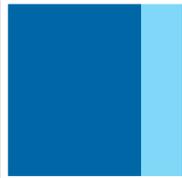
The EUR-ACE standards for accreditation are defined in the document 'EUR-ACE Framework Standards and Guidelines' (EAFSG) in terms of **student workload requirements, programme (learning) outcomes and programme management.**

The **student workload requirements** are described using ECTS credits.



Programme Outcomes describe the knowledge, understanding, skills and abilities that an accredited engineering SP must enable a graduate to demonstrate.

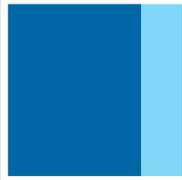
They are described separately for both Bachelor and Master Degree programmes with reference to the following eight learning areas: *Knowledge and understanding; Engineering Analysis; Engineering Design; Investigations; Engineering Practice; Making Judgements; Communication and Team-working; Learning.*



Programme management standards specify the key areas of programme management that an agency must evaluate in order to be authorised to award the EUR-ACE label and that SPs must fulfil in order to be accredited.

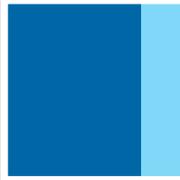
They are five, fully consistent with the ESG:

1. *Programme Aims*
2. *Teaching and Learning Process*
3. *Resources*
4. *Student admission, transfer, progression and graduation*
5. *Internal Quality Assurance*

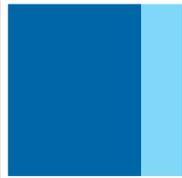


EQUASP project and conclusions

The EQUASP project (<http://equasp.tstu.ru/>) is a Tempus project (Tempus Project 543727-TEMPUS-1-2013-1-IT-TEMPUS-SMGR) that was proposed also to promote the international recognition of technological SPs of Russian Federation.



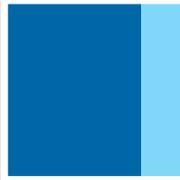
Its **overall broader objectives** are the introduction of an internal QA system focused on the definition of learning outcomes and consistent with the ESG, and the definition and implementation of an on-line documentation system of the QA of SPs (the project title is “On-line Quality Assurance of Study programmes”).



According to the EQUASP approach, in order to assure its quality a SP must comply with the national standards and requirements and the five **EQUASP standards**:

1. *Needs and Objectives*
2. *Educational process*
3. *Resources*
4. *Monitoring and results*
5. *Management system*

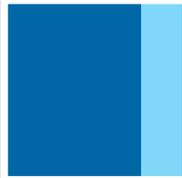
It is evident their full consistency with the EUR-ACE programme management standards (but the EQUASP standards were established before the revision of the EUR-ACE framework standards).



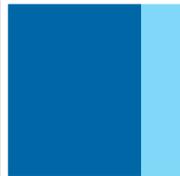
For each EQUASP standard, the EQUASP approach identifies the **processes** to be considered fundamental for a management for quality of SPs.

Then, the '**EQUASP requirements for quality**', i.e. the needs or expectations for quality, associated to each identified process are established, with the activities to be managed for their accomplishment.

Furthermore, for each identified quality requirement, the **information and data** to be documented by the SPs in order to provide evidence of the quality of the educational service provided, and therefore to assure its quality, are established and described.

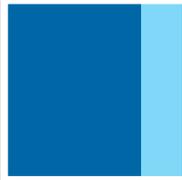


The whole of standards and quality requirements, with the associated expected activities for their accomplishment and information and data to be documented, constitute the '***EQUASP Standards and Guidelines for the internal quality assurance of study programmes (EQUASP Model)***', that represents the fundamental outcome of the EQUASP project



The **EQUASP System** – i.e. the EQUASP Model and the associated EQUASP Software for the on-line documentation of the information and data for the QA of SPs, whose implementation is in progress – can be considered a powerful instrument in order to:

- promote the design of student-centred SPs, focused on the definition of learning outcomes consistent with the needs of stakeholders;
- bring the QA process of SPs into line with the ESG;

- 
- enhance quality of SPs and increase their comparability and transparency, in order to enhance mutual trust in the quality of SPs;
 - provide the documentation necessary in any quality assessment and accreditation process.

In other words, to promote the international recognition of SPs.

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Thanks for your attention!