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DOCTORATES

ERASMUS MUNDUS



ERASMUS MUNDUS QUALITY ASSESSMENT PROJECT

QUALITY HANDBOOK

DECEMBER 2010



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1 Introduction

Overview – the Handbook and the Web site

This Handbook offers a mechanism to explore, individually or collaboratively, where excellence can be created in an Erasmus Mundus course, or whether a planned course is covering all the key aspects of excellence. The Handbook provides you with examples of good practice and is accompanied by an Online Self-Assessment Tool (available on the Erasmus Mundus Excellence website at www.emqa.eu) which invites you to respond to a set of structured questions relating to the practice on your course.

At the outset, however, we must advise that this Handbook is not in any way a formal guide about how to write a successful application for funding. The Handbook is not meant to be an exhaustive list of 'you must do this' procedures. Not all Erasmus Mundus courses will need to address every element that is covered here. Also, we do not claim that this Handbook covers every area of excellence. Indeed over three years of working together with courses we continue to identify new areas of excellence, and we have been excited at the continual innovation that is being carried out across Erasmus Mundus courses.

The Handbook is therefore meant to be used in conjunction with the more dynamic online resource www.emqa.eu where there is a much richer set of examples from the 21 courses which have participated in the project between 2008 and 2010, and where other courses now can add their own examples of excellence. This more traditional Handbook is intended to be a readable summary of headline issues, and where you want to explore particular issues in detail you can access the detail on the Web site.

The practice that is described in the Handbook is not guaranteed as being 'live'. Indeed, not all the courses visited earlier may be active. That is not the issue here – what is important is the communication of good practice built up across the courses.

Importantly, the self-assessment questions on the Web site are not intended to offer a complete and comprehensive set of practice, and when you 'self-assess' you are not benchmarking yourself against other courses (this is **not** a normative process of quality ranking). Instead, the self-assessment process invites you to see where your course practice is against a range of practice, and to then have a discussion with consortium colleagues and students about whether there are areas of quality you can focus on.

The online self-assessment allows you to explore where improvement could be prioritised. This is why the online self-assessment enables both staff and students to assess a course, using subsets of questions that are directed towards the coordinator, partner, and student experiences, as well as allowing you to construct a set of questions (using existing questions and ones you can add yourself) which are specific to your course.

Building the Handbook: Visits to Erasmus Mundus Masters Courses

The Quality Handbook has been built through a series of visits to 21 Erasmus Mundus Masters Courses - many with nearly five years of experience and selected on a voluntary basis - across over 50 partner sites during 2008, 2009 and 2010 (see the list of participating courses in the Annex). Each of the courses selected for the project during 2008-2009 was mandated to have at least three partners in other countries, though many were much more broadly based. In 2010 the courses were selected to expand the thematic and spatial coverage that had emerged in previous years.



These visits were led by senior staff from ECORYS UK (the consultants responsible for managing the EMQA project). Besides officials from the European Commission and the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA), they were accompanied by an external subject specialist with pedagogical knowledge of the discipline represented by the Masters Course, whose role it was to focus on the quality of the curriculum and its linkage to the quality of teaching and learning. In addition, the Erasmus Mundus Alumni Association (EMA) and the European Students Union were invited to propose student representatives who could provide a cross-cutting ‘consumer’ perspective.

The exercise was conducted on the basis of mutual trust and confidentiality, aiming to identify examples of good practice as well as valuable lessons based on experience. Visits were prepared in close consultation with the coordinators and partners of each Masters Course, who were also asked to complete a self-assessment questionnaire prior to the visit to their institution. Course teams contributed significant amounts of time, and spoke openly and constructively about the challenges they had experienced when building their courses. The students on the courses also contributed their experiences as ‘consumers’, and the rich material that has been gathered is testimony to the professionalism with which Erasmus Mundus teams participated in this exercise.

Understanding the major ‘Components of Excellence’

The visiting team looked at a number of issues related to the development of an ‘excellent’ Erasmus Mundus course. These included the quality of structure and processes in the context of pan-European ‘jointness’ (covering areas such as teaching and learning, assessment and the available teaching infrastructure and resources) and quality outcomes and impacts (including the student experience, impacts on research and teaching developments, etc.).

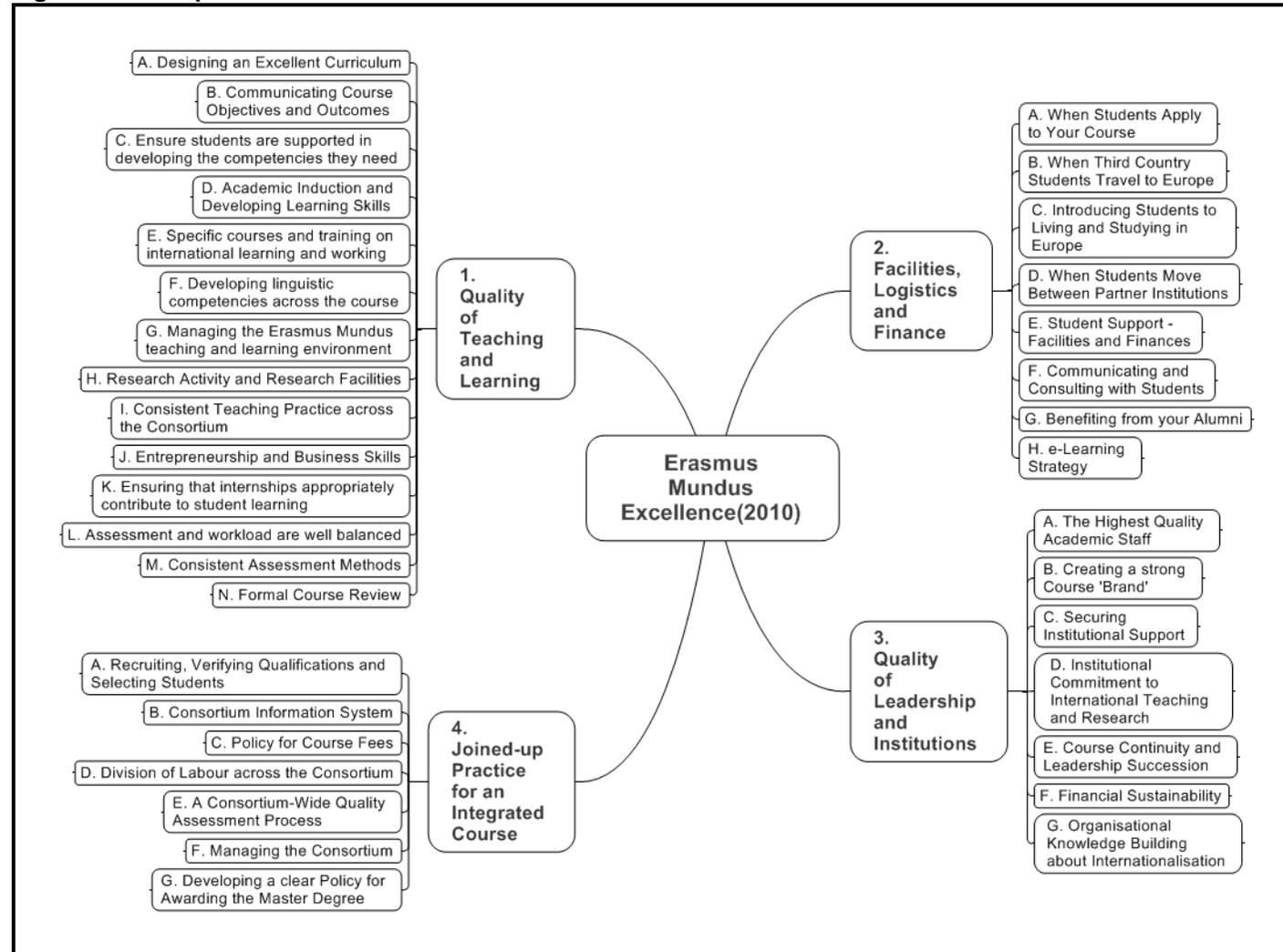
The material gathered as a result of the visits was checked for accuracy and consistency, and each set was then classified against four principal components which have been identified as providing the core framework for quality across Erasmus Mundus courses:

- **Quality of Teaching and Learning (QATL)**
- **Facilities, Logistics and Finance (FLAF)**
- **Quality of Leadership across Institutions (QUIL)**
- **Joined-up Practice and Integration (JUPI)**

Each of these ‘Components of Excellence’ contains a series of sub-components, which are specific actions that courses can undertake to improve their quality.



Figure 1.1: Components of Excellence 2010





Quality of Teaching and Learning

The first and most important dimension covers the teaching and learning experience and is called 'Quality of Teaching and Learning' (the mnemonic for this is **QATL**). The innovative and pan-disciplinary curriculum that is needed for Erasmus Mundus needs to be designed as a coherent set of modules, not just something that is simply extracted from a range of existing course offerings. The Course objectives and the learning outcomes both need to be articulated, and the way in which the Course is meeting them also needs to be monitored. The ways in which student work is assessed need at least to be coherent (it should be clear to students how work is assessed at each partner site) and ideally consistent (student work should be assessed to the same criteria at all partner sites).

Students need to be prepared so that they can arrive and learn effectively, and this is often done by careful academic preparation before they arrive. When they do arrive on the course they need to be prepared culturally as well as academically – specifically that means being aware of the learning and teaching cultures that they will experience during their mobility. For example, student assignments should be marked on a consistent basis across the consortium – this requires more than just transposing marks to an ECTS table.

The consortium needs to plan the teaching programme carefully to avoid unnecessary overlaps and duplication of curriculum, and as far as possible students should be presented with a consistent workload no matter what their mobility path is. To maximise impact both for the academic research staff and the students internships and business skills can prepare students effectively for the international labour market.

The Course should be subjected to independent and external review, so that the advice from high-reputation international academics can provide pointers to the future development of the Course. The multicultural nature of the student community can be acknowledged by developing a clear set of Course rules and ethical expectations (both socially and academically); students from such diverse backgrounds can also benefit through the provision of opportunities to extend and enrich their learning skills.

Facilities, Logistics and Finance

Secondly, attention needs to be given to 'Facilities, Logistics and Finance' (**FLAF**). In a highly competitive global education marketplace, students with the right competencies need to be attracted to come and study in Europe.

Having attracted students to apply, their applications need to be treated efficiently and effectively. Communication with the students should serve to keep them informed of the progress of their application.

When offered a place on the Course they should be prepared in advance for the move to Europe, for the culture they will live in and for the academic environment within which they will work. Since the students will move between partner institutions during their studies, the Course will need to maintain efficient and coherent communication with them, and to engage students in a constructively critical exchange of views about how the course can improve and innovate.



A consortium can be particularly challenged regarding institutional resources for students. For example it is often institutional practice that students cease to have access to Libraries when they leave the institution for another – so how can library and IT facilities be joined-up for students? This is where a strategic approach to e-learning resources can be a benefit for Erasmus Mundus courses.

When they graduate from the Course the students become alumni and will be part of a growing community of support and advice back to the consortium running the Course, so what strategies are in place to engage alumni?

Quality of Leadership and Institutions

The third dimension concerns the special set of leadership, management and academic expertise that is needed to build the complex and challenging Erasmus Mundus Masters Courses. This is 'Quality of Leadership and Institutions' (**QUIL**). The Course should attract the highest quality academic staff, because the students coming from abroad are often themselves of the highest calibre.

Excellent staff and an excellent curriculum will attract excellent students, but this cannot be achieved just within an academic departmental framework, and the consortium of partners needs to establish a strong 'brand identity' within the international education marketplace. The commitment of both the institutions and their senior staff is important. Associated with that, there is the need to show clearly that the Course contributes to the research and teaching strategies of the partners.

Excellent courses will look to the future, both in terms of having plans for the continuity of skills and expertise and to explore options for financial sustainability, or for whatever 'sustainability' will mean for the course beyond the funding cycle.

Lastly, the institutions and the academics should learn from the impact that Erasmus Mundus has for them, and embed the learning lessons back into research, teaching, and institutional practice.

Joined-up Practice and Integration

The final dimension, 'Joined-up Practice and Integration' (**JUPI**), is what makes Erasmus Mundus such a powerful international academic brand. Course management processes should show efficiency and integration of practice, rather than just being an amalgam of different practices and procedures across partner sites. The extent to which the partners and institutions work together coherently, will be a strong determinant of how well the Course is working to meet the objectives of the Bologna Process in terms of furthering cooperation in European higher education.

The selection of students needs the full involvement of all partners, and the Course needs to verify that student qualifications are legitimate and are suited to the Course requirements. Partners need to accept that the division of labour is equitable and that it will meet the demands of the curriculum being delivered to the students. The consortium should move beyond local and national quality assurance frameworks to



understand how quality is ‘performed’ and assessed across international partnerships, and the quality will be embedded within the consortium management practice.

Lastly there is the complex and challenging process of how to agree and award the Erasmus Mundus Master Degree, and this can involve confronting national legislative mandates which can restrict what can or cannot be ‘awarded’ to students.

How to use the Handbook

The material in this Handbook can be used alongside the online Self-Assessment Tool and the detailed lists of examples available online. When self-assessing each of the four ‘Components of Excellence’ there is a key challenge and a checklist of key actions for consideration. This is then supplemented by examples of practice drawn from the visits made to 21 Erasmus Mundus Masters Courses.

The phrase ‘checklist of actions for consideration’ is used deliberately, because this Handbook is not intended to be a prescriptive list of actions that you ‘must undertake’. Some of the actions will clearly be more important than others, and some actions will be more relevant to certain higher education institutions and in certain countries.

One of the main lessons drawn so far from the EMQA exercise is that quality is a ‘journey’, not an ‘absolute’. Like any product, there are innovations and new developments, and the overall balance of quality practices may change. For that reason, the online version of this Handbook (available on the Erasmus Mundus Excellence website at www.emqa.eu) has a facility for you to provide information about examples of excellence from your own course which can be considered for future versions of the Handbook.

How to use the Self-Assessment Tool

To assess how your course (existing or planned) is working towards covering the themes that are relevant to your course, the online Self-Assessment Tool (www.emqa.eu) will help you to build an overall ‘picture’, indicating where your course is strong and helping you identify areas where more attention could be given to building overall excellence. Used together with this Handbook, these quality resources aim to provide you with important contextual material and advice to help you and your partners in your own journey towards excellence.

For those of you who are considering applying for Erasmus Mundus funding, the Handbook and the self-assessment questions can help you build your own checklist of quality actions that you can use when preparing your application.

For those of you in Higher Education more generally, and in quality assurance in other sectors, the EMQA approach can be of interest in showing how a participatory approach to quality assurance can help courses to innovate and excel, rather than to focus on regime compliance against ‘a priori’ quality benchmarks.



2 Quality of Teaching and Learning (QATL)

Excellence in teaching and learning is fundamental in ensuring that quality third-country students achieve academic excellence. This is further enhanced by the cultural and social mobility that they experience during their time in Europe. Course consortia should demonstrate flexibility in enhancing teaching and learning through flexible use of the best practices. The curriculum delivered to students needs to have a clear structure, to minimise duplication of course content between partner sites and to focus on the goals of the Bologna process. The teaching and learning objectives should be clearly stated at all levels from Department to Institution.

The course components ideally should be equally weighted across all partners, as should the methods for assessment, examinations, and feedback of results to students. Academic standards should build on formal local, national and European practice.

2.1 Designing an Excellent Curriculum

The challenge:

- How can the curriculum be designed and constructed so that it forms an integrated programme?
- How can the course progression, and course materials, be designed consistently so that students experience continuity in their learning?

An effective Erasmus Mundus course is not a 'mix and match' combination of offerings across partner sites. However, the overhead costs of creating a course 'from new' are considerable, and the cost-benefits of doing this across partner institutions may not be justified on the basis of a relatively small number of students who receive scholarships.

A consortium therefore needs to engage in a critically constructive discussion, for example about their course offerings, their teaching cultures, the learning opportunities provided for students at their sites. Through the discussion the consortium can develop a 'shared mental model' of the Erasmus Mundus course, understanding in detail how their relative teaching and learning cultures can contribute effectively to a coherent academic offering for the students.

The common 'mental model' that underpins an Erasmus Mundus course needs to be converted into a course that provides students with an integrated academic programme which progresses evenly and effectively across partner sites no matter what are the mobility paths of the students. The course also needs to progress effectively from semester to semester, again no matter what the mobility paths of the students. Enabling this coherence will be a common approach to the provision of online/offline course materials, reading lists and bibliographies etc.



Checklist of actions:

- Ensure that all members of the consortium understand how other members of the consortium contribute to delivering a coherent course programme
- Schedule regular opportunities to critically and constructively identify where the coherence of the teaching programme could be improved
- Maintain a formal document which details to staff and students how the course is delivered across partner sites in a coherent manner - ensuring that the required competencies and skills are acquired across the mobility process
- Schedule a workshop to bring teachers together to discuss good practice and to plan the evolution of the curriculum
- Plan the sequencing of the modules and of learning support activities to be consistent with the design
- Show how the Course progression clearly underpins student progression to achieve the best learning outcomes
- Ensure that Course materials show that academic content is consistent with contemporary knowledge in the relevant disciplines
- Update reading lists and other core learning materials consistently across the course

Erasmus Mundus as a programme is **contributing towards Bologna objectives** through the building of coherent pan-European Master Courses. While the ideal Course is one that is designed from the outset to be Erasmus Mundus, the Courses we visited are early, pioneering Erasmus Mundus Courses where it was very challenging to create full integration and coherence from the outset. It is also clear that achieving the Bologna objectives is not just a process of designing a homogeneous course, but in **building on richness and diversity in a coherent manner**.

While students want more consistency throughout the consortium in support facilities, they do accept that academic diversity (provided that they are well prepared) is beneficial to them. There is a potential paradox between this and the Bologna process. The **students observe that the diversity of the EU experience makes them better global citizens**, especially in times of political and economic uncertainty.

Examples of good practice

The MESPOM consortium is explicit about diversity and regards it as cultural component of interdisciplinarity. The course specifically aims to move people from one culture to another, showing how science works at Manchester, not just in classrooms in Budapest. **A truly interdisciplinary 'European' course cannot be delivered by one institution.**

The MERIT course was launched at the same time as the Bologna Process, so from that early stage the consortium followed a dual path of **working together pragmatically to improve integration** and following the official institutional routes to formalise the processes. While the Master was built on existing experience, a



large percentage of the subjects were new, created exclusively for the Master. UPC (Barcelona) awarded 4-6 national students each academic year with a scholarship to support professors in developing academic material. At the University of Karlsruhe the master was also new. AT UCL and UPC, MERIT was strongly based on the existing Bologna masters on Electrical Engineering.

For the CODE course there was a team-based progression towards Bologna. **The team progressively reduced inefficiencies through shared learning practices and standards**, through making it easier for students to access consistent learning and learning resources. The mobility of teachers made it easier to use capacity tactically and to construct a course offering that minimises duplication, and which maximises the availability of staff expertise to students.

With the development of the AMASE programme, LUT made efforts to renew the curriculum structure of the Masters programme. The previous situation was hard to sustain as it was characterized by a large number of courses and a small number of students. However, with the AMASE programme, the number of curriculum units was reduced, having in mind the mobility requirements, and it was decided to adopt English as the main working language from the beginning.

Not all courses will have the ability to 'set their own agenda' for the curriculum. On the EMMME course there were **challenges in balancing Engineering professional accreditation requirements in some partner countries** (where the professional associations specify a core curriculum), with no requirements existing in others. This is a particular challenge with a course that leads to professional status in some countries, and it can therefore be difficult to provide an overall balance of course offerings.

Student mobility between partners is often strongly related to the curriculum design. Some courses have complex mobility, and with EURO CULTURE has a structure where students start at one of six partner sites, and can move to another of the six – a potential of 36 mobility paths. The underlying logic of this is that 'Euroculture' is **not specifically definable 'discipline'**, so the curriculum that a student experiences needs to match the students' own objectives with the specialisms of the partners. Other, such as DILL have a single mobility path for all students, starting in Oslo, moving to Tallinn, and then to Parma. Again, there is a clear underlying logic by **designing the mobility path** to follow course progression across the specialisms of the partners.

The underlying pedagogy and course design needs then to be communicated clearly to the students, and this is the next sub-component.

2.2 Communicating Course Objectives and Outcomes

The challenge:

- How can the Course objectives be defined in a way that achieves an integrated Course, yet respects the institutional priorities of each partner?

Making the common 'mental model' work in practice across diverse European higher educational institutional environments will be a journey towards the objectives of Bologna, not an a priori imposition of a single homogeneous academic offering on the Erasmus Mundus partners. For example, individual partner



institutions will have their own priorities for internationalisation, and partner Departments will have their own reasons for recruiting excellent third country students – some will want a good supply of doctoral research students, others may aim to place excellent graduates within strategically important industry sectors.

This mix of priorities needs to be understood, and the ways in which they contribute to common Erasmus Mundus course objectives need to be formalised within the consortium agreement, and students also need to be informed of how the partners each contribute to the overall objectives and outcome of their Erasmus Mundus course.

Checklist of actions:

- Set out and clearly document the objectives for the Course
- Communicate the Course objectives and expected outcomes to teachers and learners
- Align teaching and learning activities appropriately with course objectives and learning outcomes

A focus on clearly agreed objectives across the consortium is a key foundation for success. Furthermore, for each partner site there may be locally-relevant objectives and this makes it even more important that the **individual objectives are negotiated into a formal consortium agreement.**

Examples of good practice

EMGS (European Master in Global Studies) is a two year programme divided into four phases across two winter and two summer terms. The programme has the required modular structure made up of 120 credits (30 credits each term/phase). This equates to a study workload of 900 hours per term or 1,800 hours a year. The Course is modularised. With respect to its integration; as has been said, the philosophy and methodology gives the over-arching form but within that diversity is the norm. All students study at one of four European partner universities (London School of Economics, University, University of Leipzig, University of Vienna and University of Wroclaw) in the first year. For the second year they are required to move a second European partner university – including the University of Roskilde. The opportunity also exists under certain constraints for EU students on the course to spend one semester at one of the non-European partner universities¹.

For example, a key motivation for LUT at Lulea in Sweden to participate on the AMASE course was the strong competition between higher education institutions within Sweden. The course leaders explained how recruitment of students in Sweden was becoming increasingly difficult due to the high quality of institutions and competitive recruitment strategies. Erasmus Mundus provides **opportunities to recruit extremely high-calibre graduates from outside of Sweden.**

For the Royal Tropical Institute in Amsterdam, the TROPED Erasmus Mundus Course provided visibility for the Institution which is not core funded. KIT is 'output funded' by the Ministry and is dependent on project funding, tenders and other contract sources such as the World Bank, DANIDA, and DfID. The Course **provides an important label of quality that strengthens their case for funding.**

¹ Dalhousie University, Canada; Fudan University, China; Jawaharlal Nehru University, India; Macquarie University, Australia; University of California at Santa Barbara, USA; University of Stellenbosch, South Africa



The CODE course emerged from a previous masters programme on Local Development in the Balkans. It has expanded the focus of this course to make it international in focus – strengthening the partnership and **providing greater international credibility and visibility**.

Clearly formalised processes for agreeing objectives for MESPOM were reported at Lulea:

- Purpose – agreement on the purpose of the course is perhaps the most important part, but is often the element which is least discussed. As a joint course, partners were forced to discuss the purpose and explain it to themselves and to the outside world;
- People – the course must relate to both faculty (producers) and to students (consumers);
- Practice – MESPOM enables students to connect their thinking to practice. It also gives them access to networks which can assist them in terms of career development; and
- Pattern – developing and delivering MESPOM implied both making new patterns (i.e. new ways of working) and breaking old patterns (re-assessing how things had been done in the past).

Institutional objectives are important and for some universities the **need to expand their international profile** fits in well with the Erasmus Mundus Brand. UoD supported participation in the Erasmus Mundus programme because it allowed the NOHA programme to **attract students from all over the world**. For UPC in Barcelona, there was a similar desire to maximise the participation of international students in a Catalan University and the MERIT Course was one way to achieve that objective.

The UPC Department has an active research group, which aims to combine both research and teaching strengths. The size of the Department provides economies of scale that help support the Erasmus Mundus Course. The **Departmental strategy had identified the need for a research oriented Master degree**, and they view this as a natural linkage between Bachelors and PhD programmes. The relevance of this Master for the Department is evident in that 50% of the faculty work at some time on this Course.

Complementing the University-wide objectives will be those relevant to individual Departments. On the AMASE Course at Nancy, the Department EEIGM is a graduate engineering school with a predominant focus on industry. In an environment where it is difficult to attract French graduate students to a Master course, **the Erasmus Mundus programme is producing potential international researchers**, through the use of the EEIGM course in year 1 and the Master thesis in year 2. For the CODE Course at Budapest, the Department approach was to keep teaching and research strongly linked and Erasmus Mundus offers the chance to help **transform the Department into a graduate school**.

The structure of the course can also enable **continuity between student cohorts** so that experience and knowledge is shared effectively. On the MA-LLL course Students start either at Copenhagen or London and stay there for semesters 1 and 2. Between the two semesters **all students and staff move to Bilbao for a course seminar**. At the seminar they also meet students who are at the thesis stage, get to know the location of their third semester and potential supervisors from across the partnership, and can start to plan the location of their thesis at any of the three partner locations.

In fact the students of semester one participate in seminars with students in semester 3, who present their ideas for titles of their thesis and receive feed-back from supervisors. Students from semester one learn from the feed-back which supervisors give to the students from semester 3. For students from semester 3 this is



their very first dissertation work-in-progress experience. Furthermore there are networking activities, so students can build their own worldwide research and social network.

2.3 Developing Student Competencies

The challenge:

- How can the course ensure that students ‘a priori’ are provided with comprehensive information about the skills and competencies that will prepare them effectively for their studies?
- What is needed to ensure that students develop all the competences they need to progress and succeed in their studies?

While a course consortium can do its best to validate student qualifications, and can undertake other verification activities such as interviewing (online, by phone, using a network of experts located across the world etc.) students, it is difficult to ensure that all the students will arrive at the course with all of the necessary core competencies that are needed to start studies effectively. The period between their formal acceptance on the course and their arrival at the course provides an opportunity to communicate the core competencies, and to provide them with structured advice on how best they can obtain or reinforce them – for example online learning resources, encouraging them to read core textbooks in advance, and connecting current and future students to create a constructive dialogue where students can informally mentor each other.

Providing students with an opportunity to achieve core competencies before they arrive on the course is one consideration. Students also need to be provided with on-going opportunities to acquire and reinforce competencies once they are taking the course. Competence building therefore focuses on the ‘ex ante’ requirements (Section 1.1.3) and the ‘ex post’ activity which builds the new competencies needed to succeed on the Erasmus Mundus programme. Opportunities for competence building are required at all partner sites where students undertake mobility in any one year, and the consortium members need to understand that partner sites are developing students competences evenly.

Checklist of actions:

- Develop a consortium-wide statement on core competencies and communicate this to students once they are accepted
- Provide links to resources that are accessible to students at their home location so that they can prepare themselves to start studies effectively
- If possible, develop a pre-entry resource pack that shows admitted students what level of knowledge (for example: sample of texts as a guide perhaps) and competencies (for example: active use of language and statistical mathematical level) are required.

... continued



Continued:

- Agree a set of skills and competencies that are mandatory if the students are to succeed in their studies
- Provide opportunities for students to acquire and strengthen the key skills and competencies
- Identify where, in the structure of the Course and its mobility process, particular competencies are best inserted
- Undertake regular monitoring (tutorials etc.) of student progress in acquiring and strengthening the key skills and competencies
- Provide a system of feedback where consortium members can be informed of any issues arising about the availability of particular skills and competencies - allowing remedial action to be undertaken

There are real and urgent reasons for courses to engage proactively and early with their students. If courses do not do it then students can take the communication initiative, and become self-organising in information sharing across courses via Facebook. The Erasmus Mundus alumni students have a Facebook resource² and the current students share information³. The issue here is not one of control of information quality, but one of client relationships. Courses need to encourage students to 'identify themselves' with the course at the earliest opportunity, and the course needs to be the primary conduit for quality information flow from course to students and vice-versa.

Examples of good practice

The EUROAQUAE Course has created an integrated Handbook for students and teachers. The two independent Quality Assurance Assessors have considerable power to influence the consortium. They have emphasised its importance because some partners originally simply wanted online information. The QA Assessors insisted on the provisions of a clear and integrated Handbook which has a structure that also works online. After four years of development this was achieved, and it includes all the necessary information, as well as clearly documented procedures for students to complain and also procedures for students to be removed from the course.

The geographical origin of students has an impact on the way the EUROAQUAE course was taught, as they need to cover topics relevant to developing countries in particular (e.g. more on sanitation techniques than there may otherwise have been). The course aims to **teach students about solutions applicable to their own countries**. The EUROAQUAE course is therefore structured to allow students to undertake a **flexible personalised journey**. Guidance is provided about preparing CVs (helped to prepare a Europass CV), career plans, and interview techniques (practiced with consortium staff).

² <http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=2226237397>

³ <http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=2582205588>



EUROAQUAE students are asked to write about their **professional development** every six months, starting from the first week of the course. The outputs are usually quite realistic but changes do occur over the two years of the course. At the end of the second semester, they have to present a project, but also talk about what they want to do with their career, which has an impact on their choice of specialisation for the third semester. Informal and continuous discussions about academic paths are very useful.

On the SAHC course **students undertake a 'Pilot Test' to check their competences**, and depending on performance they are directed to the Library for reading and personal learning. Students noted that this was useful (and some mentioned that it was best to have the test on arrival, since they may have been dissuaded from taking the course if they had to take the test in advance of arrival), but that they would value some 'human' advice and support (perhaps from research students) after the test results, rather than just doing self-directed readings etc. in the library.

On the DILL course The Tallinn partners use a 'diagnostic analysis' to **assess incoming student competences**. The objectives of this analysis are to:

- Clarify the needs and expectations of the learners for IKM and HRM Modules with regard to the content and delivery options;
- Gain information on the students' existing knowledge about IKM and HRM, prior to the commencement of the Modules so that the Modules can be delivered at the right level;
- Identify which topics and components of the courses, as set out in the original specification, are most enthusiastically regarded by the participants, and which are likely to be the most useful for them in their future work;
- Identify students' preferences concerning course organisation and delivery methods;
- Gain specific information about access to and familiarity with the technology available to the participants.

The Diagnostic Analysis is carried out two months before students travel from Oslo to Tallinn, when the Tallinn University team are in Oslo. For each of the courses they will take they are informed of the content, the skills expected, the learning and teaching processes, the technical and support facilities, and students rank their current competences on a range of 1 (no competences in this area) to 10 (this is my research area). The results are used to prepare students with customised reading and learning opportunities. Also, for students who have ranked their competences highly material is provided to help stretch their competences further. The Diagnostic is also undertaken at the end of the mobility to see if students have improved their skills.

2.4 Developing Learning Skills

The challenge:

- How can the consortium work across the totality of the course to make sure that all the actors (students, academics, key support staff etc.) are in a position to work together without the risk of cultural misunderstanding, in accepting that students need to be helped in their transition from their 'home' academic environment, to the diversity of the European academic environment?



In the context of an overall aim that students ‘arrive ready to study’ the Handbook has already addressed the activities of preparing their competences and skills, and in helping them to travel and to settle into their new location. This set of actions helps students to understand how they are expected to study and to learn in their new European academic environment. Some students will come from higher education contexts where academic staff do not expect to be challenged about the material they teach.

Some students may be unfamiliar with informal learning environments. Some students may experience a double language problem – not only do they have to learn in a second language, but they also need to learn how to write in that language, and they will benefit from guidance on writing styles. And, students need to understand that European academic practice regards copying of material as an academic ‘crime’.

These actions therefore tell them what is expected of the students. It helps them in the transition from their academic environment to a European one.

Checklist of actions:

- Provide students with initial training in learning skills, including writing styles, plagiarism prevention, and presentation techniques to help in the transition to ‘European’ teaching and learning
- Provide students with a suitable range of bibliographic management tools to help them effectively structure their lecture material and readings

Learning skills include soft skills such as preparing for presentations (presentation resources such as PowerPoint, and presentation styles, professional speaking, voice projection and body language. It can include writing support, where there is an understanding the challenges that some cultures experience when writing in the **academic/literary style** of English – for example where a language does not have separate words for singular and plurals.

Students do not just need to be told that plagiarism is regarded as a major academic ‘crime’, but they need to be shown what is regarded as plagiarism, they need to be given the study skills and resources to avoid plagiarism, and they need to be clearly informed about the consequences of it.

Examples of good practice

On the MESPOM Course each University has its own ethics committee, which deals with cases of plagiarism if they occur when a student is attending that institution. At the start of the programme, **students are briefed about plagiarism**. When assignments are submitted, they must have a cover sheet confirming that the student has not plagiarised any material. The ‘Turnitin⁴’ plagiarism checking software is used. The software checks student work against material on the Internet and generates an originality report.

Best practice is undertaken on preventing plagiarism on the CODE Course in Budapest. Full guidance and tuition is provided to students at the outset. For example, guidance is provided about how to reference a source, how to quote, the nature of plagiarism, the policies and sanctions, the use of online checking software

⁴ <http://turnitin.com/static/index.html>



and the procedures of the Academic Board. These **policies and procedures are applied as consistently as possible across the consortium.**

At Budapest on the MESPOM Course there is a **Centre for Academic Writing**⁵ with language-specific support staff who provide support to the students. The Centre teaches students not just to speak and write in English but also to write professionally. Students are entitled to a certain number of hours with the Centre to discuss their assignments.

The development of wider academic skill-sets can be important for students. At UPC Barcelona on the MERIT Course, one of the transversal courses is called 'Critical Thinking'. Students regard it as an excellent course that provided them with important study skills. It addresses key aspects such as **technical and academic reading and writing, plagiarism, and referencing**. Transversal subjects offered in UCL (MERIT) address competencies on business, languages (French) and other subjects related to humanities. The business-related subjects are organised in a modular way and include contents for **entrepreneurship** which are so important in this Institution with the tradition to create business spin-offs.

On EUROAQUAE at Newcastle, UK, **a subject librarian is assigned by the University Library** to the Department, and there is a strong relationship with the courses and students. **Library resources can be accessed from the students when in their home countries.** While it is desirable to have access to all the libraries for all students, the formal process of library access requires that a student is registered at the University in Newcastle, so this can only occur when they arrive. Library has a cafe, a large set of eBooks for course texts, a writing support centre, and a language centre where directed support can be provided for ERM students to prepare them for the language of their next mobility as well as helping them to improve their English.

Each WOP-P student receives **support from two different tutors**. One provides support for the training on research (position paper, research work, master thesis), while the other provides support for the professional training (professional stage and integration report). In addition, they receive assistance related to the use of the virtual platform for education ('aula virtual'), library electronic database and data analysis. Documents and handbooks are widely available to underpin the support activities.

On the DILL course staff and student integration is achieved when at the beginning of the course students are prepared in the first of **two summer schools where staff from all institutions participate**, and where students get to know staff from across the consortium. A core element in the first summer school is XML programming language. A second summer school follows semester two. A new course is being introduced on 'Academic Writing' to further help establish consistent levels of study skills. Local Norwegian students provide advice to international students on presentation skills.

EURCULTURE focuses on **overall competences through a standard module across all partner sites**. 'Eurocompetences' covers thesis writing skills, referencing and plagiarism (an online plagiarism scanner is used, and there is a clear statement of consequences if plagiarism is identified), peer review methods, oral presentation, and collaborative writing. A new module in 2011 covers writing applications for research projects, and identifying research funding sources. This module focuses on 'academic acculturation' and is for all international students in the University.

⁵ <http://web.ceu.hu/writing/>



2.5 International Learning and Working

The challenge:

- How will the students, and also all the staff across the Erasmus Mundus Course, be prepared to 'work together' effectively?
- How can students from other global learning cultures be prepared to learn and study according to the academic practices across the course consortium?

These actions are not about how to work academically at a European university. They relate to the challenge for all those actors on the course (students, staff, support staff, laboratory technicians etc.) to understand respect each others' cultural practices, and to find sensitive ways of avoiding any problems. For example there can be opportunities for intercultural training of all staff who will be in contact with students, covering understanding of the different interpretations of gestures, body language, professional relationships, addressing people etc. In addition there need to be clearly defined standards expected of all actors, and these can be formalised in a code of ethics.

Checklist of actions:

- Ensure that all those at the 'front-line' (administrative, academic, library, support, laboratory technicians etc.) when dealing with students are provided with awareness training in 'working internationally'
- Clearly communicate the 'ways of teaching and learning' within a European university to students, and provide awareness and training opportunities to those who need help in the transition to 'European' teaching and learning
- Provide students with a written code of practice which they sign and agree to comply with
- Ensure that the code has clear mechanisms for the communication of ethical problems, with a confidential and transparent process being used to evaluate and resolve the problems
- Make the code responsive to the range of cultural and religious practices of third-country students
- Provide opportunities for 'front-line' staff across the consortium to exchange experience and advice about 'European' teaching and learning practices and the issues arising from international working

An Erasmus Mundus Course will have a complex mix of cultures and academic backgrounds. Just as it is important to prepare students for their time in a range of European societies and cultures (covered in earlier sections), it is also important to **prepare them effectively for the academic and social behaviours that will help students and staff to focus on the teaching and learning**. It is not enough to 'expect respectful



behaviour' between students themselves and between students and staff. There need to be clear examples of what is acceptable and what is showing good practice.

Examples of good practice

On the TROPED Course at KIT Amsterdam, there is not a formally published code of ethics, but the **behaviour 'ground rules'** are displayed in classrooms. The rules are jointly owned by students and staff and wherever possible positive reinforcement is used rather than punishments. For example, a student arriving late for a class, without a legitimate reason, would be expected to say sorry by bringing cookies to the next class.

Lastly, the code should be sensitive to the range of **religious and cultural practices** among the students, acknowledging issues such as dietary requirements, the need to pray at certain times, and particular requirements such as single-sex accommodation.

On the EUROAQUAE course in Budapest academic staff prepare for the arrival of students by **learning in advance about the particular situation in the countries of origin of the students**. Europe is the leading player in river basin management and part of the vision for EUROAQUAE is to spread good practice to developing countries.

On the EUROCULTURE course in Krakow the Eurocompetences module is used to explore issues such as xenophobia and racism, and changing levels of tolerance across Europe towards minorities. This helps make students sensitive to local and national sensibilities related to injustice.

It is not just the academic staff and the students who need to be aware 'internationally', but all staff who will be in contact with the students. For example, we were told of generic challenges experienced by some courses. There can be a 'multi-culture shock' when students arrive. A male student from the Middle East might not wish to touch a woman even to shake hands – something that for him was culturally normal. This caused tensions with the support staff. The coordinator discussed this with him, and proposed not shaking hands with anyone. So there was an ad-hoc process of mediating cultural issues as they arise. Another international student started with what was regarded as a 'condescending attitude to administrative staff' and again was seen to discuss the issue. A Thai student stopped and bowed whenever a member of staff passed. But, this shows how all staff in the institution need to be 'internationalised' not just the academics.

There are various strategies that can be considered, and one is seen on the SAHC course in Minho where the internationalisation of all staff is an objective, and some laboratory technicians have gone to the Czech partner to experience facilities and teaching environments there.



2.6 Developing Linguistic Competencies

The challenge:

- How will students be prepared for the learning standards and practices they will experience at the European universities and what processes and facilities are available to them to cope with the languages spoken at each partner site?
- How are the academic and support staff prepared for teaching in English, or the local language of teaching?

Should students be expected to start immediately with lectures in a local language that they are only starting to learn? If local language tuition is provided generally for students should separate tuition be provided in another language for those students who are already proficient in the local language?

What should be done if the English language proficiencies of students are greater than those of some teachers? Language therefore is not a simple issue of providing generalised tuition. Language training should be placed within two strategic goals, first that of 'maximising the learning potential and academic achievements of the students', and second that of 'maximising the ability of students to engage with the local societies within which they will live'.

Checklist of actions:

- Ensure that the consortium understands the overall language requirements that will be placed on students throughout their mobility and takes a collective view on how best to deal with any issues arising from site to site
- Understand the differences between language competencies needed for basic local social interaction, and those needed for the academic programme, and makes a distinction in the training that is offered
- Provide students with opportunities to learn languages prior to their arrival in Europe, and prior to their mobilities
- Ensure that there is awareness of the language competencies needed while students are on internships in companies where only the local language is spoken

In Budapest on the MESPOM Course, all students attend a course in 'survival Hungarian' and some will opt to take more advanced courses. Compulsory classes in English for academic writing are given to students whose first language is not English, and they receive two **course credits for participating in language classes**. At UoT (Turin) the MERIT modules are taught in English, but the Department offers Italian language classes to MERIT students and six credits can be obtained from the language classes.



Proactive language preparation will also benefit students, so that they arrive at another university with basic language skills. At LUT (AMASE) the Course provides access to preparatory language learning (for example if students were moving from Sweden to France/Germany/Spain) from an early point. The decision to make **preparatory language learning** available from the first semester was taken as a response to the student Course feedback/evaluation system. LUT also offer intensive courses in the partner languages towards the end of the academic year.

The AMASE students in Nancy said they were well integrated with French students and noted in particular the intensive French course provided for them, as well as the French tuition provided before in Lulea. **Students did value the challenges of learning a new language** and said that it was beneficial to them, so local language tuition was important in helping them to integrate with French students and the local community.

At UCL (MERIT) some 70% of the courses were taught in English as of early 2008 and the migration to full English teaching was progressing. During this time **a teaching assistant was available to students to help them clarify lecture material that is taught in the local language.**

Where students did express concerns was when Course modules were not taught in English. The additional challenge of learning the scientific local language, so that they could understand lectures was too demanding and they felt they lost academic value in the lectures. However, **students also were aware that poor local language skills could restrict their choice of placements and internships.** Some students expressed regret that they had not been able to access internships through the MESPOM Course at IIEE. This was attributed to language difficulties, since most of the students do not speak Swedish and thus it is difficult to locate suitable host companies.

Students said that technical terms were challenging in new languages, and discussed whether students and staff could work together building **an online Wiki resource** to avoid students having to 'reinvent the wheel' each year when searching for the meaning and translation of key terms

In Lyon on the EMMME course the institution (INSA) provides language courses in English during the first semester. The course also makes **a language transition**, with the first month taught in English, and then more and more in French, with the second semester being all French. During the second semester students are given language preparation for their mobility destination, and in future all language tuition will be given course credits. On the DILL course language support is available, and in Tallinn students also have the option of learning the Estonian language. Students can receive support in English speaking, and there are optional language courses in English and Italian (**the next mobility language**).

For EMMME students at UPC in Barcelona there is **a private language school** for UPC students to receive 3 hours a week. If they want more they are directed to another school, for example to prepare them in French for mobility to INSA. There is an optional language course in August.



2.7 Managing the Teaching and Learning Environment

The challenge:

- How can partners use the best available techniques and technologies to support and to enable the teaching and learning environment?

An effectively 'joined-up' Erasmus Mundus Master course will present students with a unified teaching and learning environment. By this we do not mean that all teaching should be the same style, or that lectures should all have the same structure. However, courses should consider the 'message' that is sent to students when the students are given their learning timetables only when they arrive on their mobility.

What message is being given to students if reading lists are provided in different format – for example some on paper (in different bibliographic styles) and some online? Is it acceptable that one partner makes all lecture notes available on an electronic teaching resource, while another partner provides them ad-hoc on paper?

These actions should now be taken as mandating that homogeneity should exist across the teaching and learning environment, but it does promote the idea that Erasmus Mundus is more than just 'stitching together' the teaching and learning offerings at partner sites.

Checklist of actions:

- Provide students with an integrated teaching platform that operates seamlessly across all partner sites
- If an integrated system is not available, prepare students effectively prior to their mobility, so that they are familiar with the different teaching platforms as soon as they arrive at a partner location
- Provide students with learning tools, such as electronic bibliographic software, so that they manage reading and notes effectively and efficiently
- Share teaching and learning materials electronically across all participants in the consortium should be a standard element of any supporting technological platform for learning

and end of academic courses and their main phases: course timings, mobility periods and a timetable for the exchange of marks. The WOP-P Master extends over two academic years and offers students a double degree on completion. The Master comprises a total of 120ECTS over a period of two years. Both first and second year have an equal work load of 60ECTS with the workload almost equally distributed between the semesters. The **courses have the same ECTS across the five Universities** in the consortium.

In WOP-P students are allocated a **home University** in the first year. This is seen as their effective base. In addition they are allocated to a host University. Depending on the course elements selected, students spend either 1 or 1.5 semesters away from their 'home' site. Any combination of 'home' and 'host' universities within the set of partners is theoretically possible, so long as the student spends time in two different countries



EUROAQUAE **teaching methods depend on the semester**. The first is termed a ‘knowledge update’ and the focus is on scientific methods. This **introductory element** (common to all locations) was established after they realised that students had very different abilities depending on where they came from, so having the same type of degree did not mean they knew the same things. **Students are given an exam at the start to allow the teaching staff to gauge the level of each person**. The basic subjects like maths are then compulsory. Intensive learning and constant interaction with students is feasible because the groups are quite small (never larger than 10-15).

Typically EUROAQUAE students work in small groups. A major component is the group project during the three-month Hydro Europe project, which brings about 120 students each year to Nice for two weeks and which EM students take part in. It entails a focus on looking at the flooding of the Var River near Nice and students must explain the data, **present ideas and interact with policy-makers and practitioners**.

Where a department has ‘world class research facilities, it is important to be clear to communicate to students what benefit they will gain from such facilities – will it be just to look at them, to have practical demonstrations, or to undertake practical work or participate in research projects?

On EUROAQUAE at Newcastle, UK, the Department provides a **Common Room for students** with food and drink machines, and the coursework office is attached to it for the submission and return of work. There is 24/7 access to computing resources in the Department.

There are many ways in which courses can help to create overall consistency. On the MA-LL course in London at IoE it is normal practice for **staff to sit in on each other’s lectures** and to interact. This both shows students how staff ensure connectivity between modules, and encourages them also to interact with staff is a constructively critical dialogue. Students are also made aware that living in London gives them access to a **rich environment of lectures and seminars etc. at other Institutions in the city**. At the course seminar for everyone in Bilbao during Semester 1 **new students meet Dissertation students from a previous cohort, as well as Alumni**. This gives an opportunity for multiple cohorts of students to exchange experience and advice, and helps the new students to hear from their peers about the dissertation opportunities, and overall values of the course.

Overall, then, courses aim to balance the rich experiences that students can gain about the teaching cultures at mobility locations, with a need to create the overall balance and consistency of the course. Students often note that the variety of experience makes them better ‘international’ people, so it is also important to introduce them to local teaching culture. For example, on Euroculture in Krakow students are introduced quickly to the academic culture of Poland, including the expected etiquette when addressing senior staff, and the ‘Index (or Log) Book’ which is a legal document where students and staff must record marks and comments.



2.8 Research Activity and Research Facilities

The challenge:

- How can partners ensure that their research activities and research facilities are delivering the maximum learning value to students?

Erasmus Mundus consortia are usually made up of highly research-active staff. This is one of the particular qualities of those Erasmus Mundus courses which are strongly research-focused and which often have direct pathways for students into PhD programmes, or pathways that take students into businesses that are undertaking leading-edge research. Providing students with the opportunity to experience state-of-the-art facilities can energise them to focus on a research career.

This is also a process of managing expectations and perceptions of students – many of them are attracted to courses by the international reputation of the partners and their research activities and facilities, and it can be a negative experience if they are not given meaningful access to the facilities that have been instrumental in establishing the research reputations of the consortium.

Checklist of actions:

- Provide students with opportunities to work directly with staff on current research projects
- Link dissertations effectively to current research priorities
- Ensure that internships and placements take place at locations which are putting research into practice
- Provide students with meaningful experience of state-of-the-art laboratory and research facilities in partner institutions

Examples of good practice

On EuMAS in Pisa the Department has a spin-off company called ALTA SpA⁶) which is a leading-edge space company, and which provides world-class research facilities. Some students have the opportunity to carry out thesis work there, with employment opportunities also being available.

The EUROAQUAE **course is designed specifically to complement the EU Water Directive**, to provide expertise to apply this important set of regulations. So for example the first semester addresses water ecology (including field trips) and in Newcastle in the second semester the issues of public engagement and

⁶ <http://www.altaspa.com/profilo.asp?lingua=ING>



participation is taught. The research focus is important, because Civil Engineering graduates tend to go directly into jobs, and there is not a general culture to stay on for Master and PhD studies. International students arriving via Erasmus Mundus are an important source of potential research students.

One the EMMME in Lyons the parent institution INSA values the linkage between research and teaching, and does not separate them out. **National agency accreditation for researchers** requires one paper every two years in a top-ranked journal and staff in the Department average at least one per year. Research evaluation is over a four year period. There is no state funding for research in mechanical engineering, so contract money from industry is essential, and **excellent research students are vital in building research capacity**. Companies have their own 'natural ranking' of research departments and money goes where there is commercial research value being created.

On the IMQP course there is a strong research focus, and **students are encouraged to participate in conferences and other research outlets**, and there is an international doctoral programme between partners in Italy, France and Spain. The Master therefore for some students is a transition phase from undergraduate degree to doctoral research. Similarly, on SAHC the research linkage is strong with a leading journal, International Journal of Architectural Heritage, published by Taylor and Francis, and Professor Paulo B. Lourenço is co-editor.

On the AMASE course at Saarbrücken there is a Science Park with start-up companies emerging from University research activities. The Science Park has won a national best practice award in biosciences, biochemistry, materials science. The Leibniz Institute there is the Institute for New Materials. The Fraunhofer Institute for Non-Destructive Testing is on-site and it provides leading research and consultancy experience for students. The European School of Material was established here for Germany and is linked to the ESM site in Nancy.

2.9 Consistent Teaching Practice

The challenge:

- How can an active process be implemented across the consortium to identify and deal with issues arising from differences in the style, level and content of courses from partner to partner?

These actions are not about content – they are about practice. How do staff at the next mobility location know what the students were taught at the previous mobility location, or do they just wait for the students to tell them? How do staff at one partner site know about the teaching styles of their colleagues at other sites – or do they just assume that they all do it properly?

In many courses it is the students who do the 'joining up' of the curriculum, compensating for differences in teaching facilities and styles. These actions therefore focus on the mechanisms by which courses ensure that they understand, review, and constantly improve the teaching practice across the consortium.

The documented practice is thin at this stage, since these are actions that have emerged out of the discussions with students, where they have expressed their frustrations with unevenness of teaching practice.



Checklist of actions:

- Embed staff mobility within the teaching process, such as staff teaching on courses at other partner sites, giving joint-seminars at other partner sites, or providing pre-mobility teaching preparation to students while at other partner sites
- Ensure that all partners are aware of the different teaching cultures and practices, and offer documented advice to students about the different practices that they will experience
- Take part in formal, or informal, 'peer-group' teaching assessment, by sitting-in on the teaching activities of partners and providing constructive feedback

Local coordinators could plan an **incoming student debrief**. Formal sessions can be provided by the coordinator and administrative staff to hear of experiences (positive and negative) at the previous mobility site(s), and feedback about the experiences is provided to other members of the consortium

At the start of each module of a new semester/mobility the **teachers can summarise what they understand was provided in the previous modules**, and how the current module will build on previous learning

A mechanism could be developed which **allows a student to be intellectually challenged by different course material** if a course is substantially repeating material covered in their previous degree courses. And, the course has a clear process of teaching to ensure that if students are from a diverse disciplinary background, they are provided with the fundamental skills and knowledge needed to undertake the course modules successfully.

On the AMASE course a spreadsheet was developed with information about **potential overlap between courses across the consortium**. This is based on course descriptions provided by each teacher, and those with potential overlaps are asked to resolve issues professionally. This process acknowledged that course descriptions in themselves are generalised overviews, and the content within lectures may indeed be different even if they have similar titles.

Consistency can be built in many ways, including the harmonisation of the design of teaching materials. On the DILL course the consortium has agreed that all reading lists from staff, and all work by students, must reference literature in the American Sociological Association style. The MA-LLL course also requires that **reference lists are provided in a standardised format** throughout all modules. MA-LLL staff in London also attend each other's lectures on a regular basis and will participate with the students in questions and discussions during the lectures.

And, courses can provide points during the course where all students and staff meet for a common activity. Between Semesters 2 and 3 all EURO CULTURE students, and many staff, gather for the 'Intensive Programme' that brings all the actors together for the first time. This takes place over 10 days with all students and staff and guest lecturers. There are lecture and seminar programmes, excursions, career days. A paper is written by students as preparation for the Programme, and is presented (there is also a preparation session for presentation styles) during three presentation sessions where two tutors and the students peer-assess the presentation.



2.10 Entrepreneurship and Business Skills

The checklist for action:

- How can students be provided with the skills to develop businesses, to plan and develop a programme of research, and to manage intellectual property effectively?

In the same way that students should be prepared for entry to their Erasmus Mundus course, they also should be prepared with the competencies needed for their 'exit' from Erasmus Mundus, for example to move into business, or to start a research career. Such preparation will make the students attractive to employers.

Checklist of actions:

- Provide opportunities for students to develop business plans and research plans
- Provide learning opportunities related to information management and intellectual property law and practice

Examples of good practice

The EUROAQUAE **Industry Core Group** advises the course directly about **business and research needs**, also helping the course to ensure that the curriculum prepares the students effectively. For example, the Group has recommended that the course improve the Alumni Web site to maximise course-industry linkage. It has recommended that the course again teaches Java programming, rather than Visual Basic – Java had been dropped from the course after it was regarded as too demanding for some students.

EUROAQUAE students are asked to write about **their professional development** every six months, starting from the first week of the course. The outputs are usually quite realistic but changes do occur over the two years of the course. At the end of the second semester, they have to present a project, but also talk about what they want to do with their career, which has an impact on their choice of specialisation for the third semester. Informal and continuous discussions about academic paths are very useful.

On the MERIT course at UC Louvain teaching address **transversal competencies on business**, languages (French) and other subjects related to humanities. The business-related subjects are organised in a modular way and include contents for entrepreneurship which are so important in this institution with the tradition to create spin-off companies.

On the EUROCULTURE course **employability** is considered during the core 'Eurocompetences' course in Semesters 1 and 2, and is covered also in Semester 4. There are sessions on writing CVs, on promoting themselves to employers, on communication skills, and on being innovative in identifying employment opportunities.

Lastly, on the AMASE course there is a partnership with Airbus, and 10% of students do internship research in the company in Hamburg. The potentially vital role of internships is therefore a specific heading that follows this section.



2.11 Internships Contributing to Student Learning

The challenge:

- How can internships and placements be a key attractor that motivates students to apply to the course, both enriching the learning experience of the students and to prepare them for real-world working environments?

Internships and placements benefit all parties involved – in short this means making sure that an internship is not ‘cheap labour’ for an employer, but is a rich learning experience for students. For students internships provide a valuable opportunity to link theory with practice and to experience commercial cultures in Europe. For the academics involved the students can be valuable and highly skilled capacity in joint research projects with industry. For industry the students bring new knowledge, both in terms of their academic training and in terms of the information they can contribute about the market in their home country.

Checklist of actions:

- Use a structured process for obtaining placements or internships
- Make the placement/internship system flexible and diverse so that the academic needs of the students are satisfied
- Create or structure the existing placement/internship vetting system
- Capture, structure, and learn from student feedback on placement/internship
- Ensure that the balance of placement options across participating institutions is fair and appropriate

The NOHA team in Deusto also highlight the advantages of internships. Deusto have agreements with NGOs for internship periods for its students. These include the Red Cross, MSF, UNICEF, Oxfam and other international NGOs, as well as local NGOs. This **enhances the employability of students** as this is a valuable experience in the labour market. They can also obtain employment in the institution where they undertook the internship.

Internships provide additional value, because the staff in the placement organisations can act as assessors of the competences and skills acquired by the students during the Masters Course, and the relevance of these skills to industry or to professions.

It is important that students feel there is **a consistency in the availability of internships across a consortium**, or else that there are clearly justified reasons for that not to be the case. For example it can be difficult to arrange industry placements in Sweden, since most of the students do not speak Swedish to a level where they can engage effectively in a company, and thus it can be difficult to locate suitable host companies.

There also is a balance to be found between deciding for students where they will be placed, and encouraging them to explore the options themselves. In Groningen on the NOHA Course students are



encouraged to use the University internship office in person and encouraged to think creatively about the organisations (not restricting their thinking by the provision of a closed list of organisations) where they would like to undertake their internship and improve their job-searching skills.

Moreover, students come to the programme from very different backgrounds and providing a central list of preferred organisations may not be suitable. Some former NOHA students are currently also now in a position to offer internships to those undertaking the programme.

The Course Web site can be a useful forum for internship information, and on MESPOM in Budapest the Web site has a space for a clearing house for student internships. It shows potential host information and the information on what students are looking for.

On the EMMME course in UPC Barcelona the issues of internships is complex. There are possible language issues with local companies where only Spanish is spoken, and **where safety issues mean that fluent communication in the local language is needed**. Also, there can be difficulties obtaining the necessary documents required for 'working' with local companies.

On the EUROAQUAE course **internships are available to all students at any site**. Students are encouraged to search themselves for placements, but they also are referred to a core set of companies which form the 'Club of Friends' and the 'Industrial Core Group'. Industry is therefore fully embedded into the course. The process to **match the right student to the right company is through a research project with a company**. Hydro-informatics modellers are very much in demand so little difficulty in placing students. Internships take place in 4th semester where companies train them, and may offer jobs to them. The course team does screen students against placements, and may advise them against applying for internships. For example, a Nigerian student had a job in a national ministry, so was set a **personalised project in place of an industrial internship**. There is a sensitive focusing of the value of the internship to company needs, and the individual skills and career needs of the students.

EUROCULTURE, with its challenging mobility paths, places importance on internships. In Krakow internships are organised in cooperation with institutions in Krakow and Warsaw. **Students must experience an activity of definable academic value**, for example realistic field-work, organising conferences, PR work etc. The University is building a database of internship providers and student experiences.

The provision of specific internships can, however, be a challenge. ECTS can present problems for the consortium, and on the MA-LLL course IOE London **cannot award ECTS grades for internships** (a University of London decision) and this means that this course cannot provide internships (otherwise all students would have to go to locations other than IOE). However students in Copenhagen have a few days internship in different organisations, but which do not lead to ECTS. In the next version of the Programme there will be an **opportunity for students to 'shadow' a researcher**.

Lastly, the **timing and the time of internships** can be a difficult balance. For the DILL consortium Internships last for four weeks. This may be too short a period, and there is a risk that students become a temporary burden for organisations, and the experience is therefore more observational than it is participatory. Finding places is difficult also where work permits are required. Norway opportunities include the University Library Bergen, HiO Library, Oslo Public Library, National Library, and the private company Norwegian Veritas. Parma includes the National Library in Rome, the International Library in Parma. Only



Oslo and Parma are involved in arranging internship, Tallinn is not involved in this process. Internship is a part of the Modules in Parma.

2.12 Balancing Workload and Assessment

The challenge:

- How can the workload for students (assignments, reading, attending classes etc.) be well-balanced across all partner sites, but still allow the students to ‘experience’ the particular qualities of the teaching and learning cultures at each site.

Students often tell us that they come to ‘study in Europe’ specifically to experience a variety of cultures, languages, and educational systems. While the Bologna process aims to join-up higher education across Europe it is not meant to impose a homogeneous system on all member states.

The challenge of balancing workload and assessment therefore involves a self-critical process across a course, to minimise big differences in student workloads between partners, to ensure that each student – regardless of their mobility – experiences a reasonably equitable workload.

Checklist of actions:

- Ensure that the students accept that overall they experience consistent workload and assessment requirements no matter what their mobility is:
 - Review the assessment loads and schedules for each partner site
 - Provide students with a clear ‘study diary’ for their semesters where lectures, labs, and work submission deadlines are clearly identified
 - Communicate clearly to students why there may be differences in workloads – for example particular specialisms at partner sites, different balances between classes and self-learning etc.
- Consult and listen to students (see the section under FLAF) and understand their experiences and concerns. Through constructive dialogue continue to work towards a balance of work for them.

This activity aims to avoid student discontent about the balance of the curriculum. Students can be very vocal about problems for example in some meetings students regarded balance as being uneven, and there is not much opportunity for workload planning. Individual staff set work and deadlines. Students regard the examination timetable as being intensive, reporting occasions where several exams are scheduled on the same day, and would welcome more time to prepare for exams. Students sometimes reported that assignments on courses can be required around the same time period, and that staff give extensions for work submission. There are more significant issues relating to workload across the partner sites, and students observed that some course with 3 ECTS were harder than some with 7 ECTS.



Some good practice can be described as aiming for curriculum continuity. At the start of each module of a new semester/mobility the **teachers summarise what they understand was provided in the previous modules**, and how the current module will build on previous learning. It shows students clearly that there is thinking and continuity between modules, and that they are not just independently self-standing products.

On AMASE at Saarbrücken there is a University level programme that **'controls' the workload prediction of students across their portfolio of modules**. Students can also work this out themselves interactively, thus being able to estimate ahead on workload.

On TROPED in Amsterdam students are provided with a **study timetable** when they arrive, giving details of the teaching and workload schedules. There is a strategy of balancing the workload through the course. For students arriving in Spring (Track 2) a member of staff visits them in December in Copenhagen to discuss thesis preparation.

For MESPOM there is an academic calendar for the full academic year, and this shows what will happen on the course, lists the holidays in each country etc.

There is no single definitive set of actions to achieve balance, and balance is broadly addressed by the **'tuning processes'** across the European Higher Education Area. For the DILL course their tuning experience was a particular help in preparing the integration of the EM curriculum. Tuning methodology is the result of a discourse, and moving it to operational reality was very challenging. Denmark was an early adoption of the process of learning outcomes and ECTS, and they were one of the first countries to articulate a qualifications framework.

2.13 Consistent Assessment Methods

The challenge:

- How can the different academic practices at partner sites be resolved so that the students are provided with consistency in their workload across institutions and so that their work will be assessed consistently throughout their period of study?

Earlier sections have noted the challenges of welcoming Third Country students into the European academic environment. However, the 'academic environment' is not homogeneous and it has been acknowledged that exposure to a diversity of experiences can be valuable for students. In some areas, however, consistency is also valuable and one of the key areas relates to the ways in which student work is assessed and the ways in which they receive feedback about their work.



Checklist of actions:

- Show how the assessment weightings given to Course elements are carefully adjusted to the balance of the overall curriculum
- Communicate the marking, assessment, and feedback criteria to students
- Show how the assessment criteria meet the objectives of ECTS¹
- Justify how assessment weightings take workloads and Course progression properly into account
- Document how the assessment weightings are designed to take account of the different backgrounds of the students
- Plan a review process for Course weightings to ensure continuous improvement of the Course
- Provide transparent information to students about assessment and examination loads, marking methods, and timetable

Students have been quite clear about their needs: **students need to know the criteria on which their work is being assessed; students want to know that when they submit work for marking it will be returned in a timely fashion** (put bluntly, why should students have to observe work deadlines if staff do not also observe marking deadlines); and **when work is returned with a mark, the students need sufficient comments to show why the mark is given** and to understand where they could have improved their work (comments should be focused on positive reinforcement, rather than negative criticism).

What is planned needs to be put into action and in this area students can be quite critical. Students on some courses told us that the feedback often was inconsistent between partner sites. Some students noted that there was little feedback received on assignments, some delays in actually receiving grades and that whilst some professors gave feedback on work, some didn't. Individual staff set work independently and set their own submission deadlines.

Students regarded some examination timetables as being intensive, reporting occasions where several exams are scheduled on the same day. These students would welcome more time to prepare for exams. Students wanted to know why they got the results they did. They need good feedback not just on formally submitted work ('summative' work where marks contribute to their degree), but also to other 'formative' work such as laboratory exercises. More formative assessment and more elaborate feedback would certainly enhance the student experience.

Examples of good practice

For the MERIT course, the need to be consistent is clearly stated. There is **a systematic process across the consortium for agreeing marking criteria** and this is noted in the consortium agreement. Similarly with MESPOM there is robust marking of dissertations, which undergo double marking and a moderator oversees significant differences in the marks allocated. Also in MESPOM marking criteria are defined to ensure that marking is consistent across the universities.



On the MESPOM Course in Lund, the students expressed praise for the quality of assessment, noting that the **feedback given was individual and detailed**, often challenging students on their work, which “pushes you further”. In order to promote consistency in the grading of final dissertations, a **standard marking template** was devised by MESPOM and there is a **formal document outlining the Examining Board Procedures**. In addition, **cross-reading of student assignments is carried out across partner sites**, which has enabled the teachers to gain an understanding of partner institutions’ grading systems and scales.

On the TROPED course at UoC, they must comply with a regulation that all Danish courses must have **fixed dates for the submission of work by students and return of marks to them by staff**. This further demonstrates that the variability of practice can be a function of the national educational framework, but it also suggests that excellent Erasmus Mundus Courses will aim at least to **build a coherent assessment process up to the standard of the best partner**.

As well as knowing that their work is being marked against consistent and clearly communicated criteria, students also want to know that their work counts consistently towards their final degree. It does not convince students that consistency is in place if a 3000-word essay counts differently towards their degree outcome in two partner sites. Here the ECTS goals have been influential.

For the early Erasmus Mundus Courses, the progression towards ECTS has been challenging. In the MERIT course the ECTS grading system is not as yet fully applied in the consortium proportionally, but has been used more as a grading system that has been adapted progressively to the different national grading systems. The national grading system had to be adapted for MERIT. In Belgium it is possible that a student obtaining 9 over 20 can be awarded a ‘pass’ mark in exceptional cases.

This corresponds to the approach of other countries such as the ‘pass’ mark that was awarded some years before in the United Kingdom for students obtaining from 40% to 50%. In most of European countries a mark of less than the half corresponds to a failure and UCL has decided not to allow giving a passed mark if a 9/20 is obtained. Therefore, **a process of negotiated compromise over marking systems is a pragmatic part of the journey towards coherence**.

In the NOHA Curriculum development process, active negotiation is evident. Lecturers involved in the different modules have provided comprehensive and detailed outlines of their courses and learning objectives, in terms of competences. As a result, each university involved in NOHA has been able to create similar learning activities, with a common logic and approach and **common learning outcomes**. **Students are provided with lists of the competences they are expected to develop, with relevant indicators and descriptors**.

The NOHA network has participated in training organised by the Programme Coordinator, an ECTS national counsellor. Also within the institutions of the network there are three **ECTS counsellors who undertake ‘quality checks’** that include the use of the grading scale which the network has decided to use.

For the MESPOM Course the Consortium worked on mapping **grades across partner universities**. An external examiner indicated that the outcome was satisfactorily mapped to ECTS. The most difficult point to agree on was how to identify distinctions. As distinctions are awarded in the UK but not in other countries, this was submitted to the University Administration at Manchester for approval.



For the NOHA Course there were other negotiations and compromises necessary. The length of the programme has been a point of discussion within the consortium. Sweden and Belgium, countries where partners in NOHA are located, limit the time of their Master programmes to either 60 or 120 ECTS credits. In the case of Sweden, the Ministry of Education was informed of the commitments to the NOHA programme and the Ministry did not enforce an immediate move from 90 into a 120 ECTS degree programme. The NOHA degree programme has a duration equivalent to 90 ECTS, delivered in 3 semesters:

- Intensive programme (5 ECTS) – all students in one university (rotating per year);
- Core programme (25 ECTS) –each student is based in its university of enrolment;
- Specialisation (30 ECTS) –each student in any of the universities of the programme;
- Research/ internship (30 ECTS)-each student, in a NOHA university or a humanitarian aid organisation.

A programme of **double-marking of assignments across partner sites** will provide the basis for an evidence-led understanding of the different marking practices by consortium staff. This is the case for MA-LLL students in London.

Examination timing. **Give clear information about the marks to be gained from each question** so that students can plan their time effectively

At some locations students noted that ‘markers work to their own time-frames’ and that marks, comments and the return of work are uneven. One of the staff did admit that ‘if we had more demand from students the delay would be shorter’ indicating a lack of attention to the timely return of work. Part of the issue is that local students wait until the end of a semester, and generally do not complain about the lack of return of marked work.

The EUROAQUAE marking scheme has a **formal matrix of marks where the relationships between marking methods at each site are linked**. Students therefore can see the linkage between marks at each mobility site. This is also detailed in the diploma supplement.

A EUROAQUAE examination board meets every semester and results are validated according to local regulations (for example in France the rules require that at least two opportunities to re-sit are offered). The effect is to **apply the ‘most favourable’ rules available across the consortium** to achieve fairness and consistency. Adjustments are made to marks twice a year, which involves the participation of all five institutions in a meeting.

As with the previous section (consistency and ‘tuning’) there is no definitive set of actions. It is much more difficult to harmonise marking for social sciences and the humanities where essays are marked more subjectively. The EURO CULTURE course champions cultural diversity, and the consortium does not want to impose cultural homogeneity on all areas of academic practice. Therefore different marking cultures are ‘understood’ rather than harmonised – this helps students to prepare for the cultural diversity they will experience throughout life. The distributions of mark grades has been analysed across partner sites to understand if there are trends for some partners to mark higher or lower than others. – a table is provided to consortium members showing (on the ECTS matched grades across institutions) the percentage of their marks in each grade. This then invited discussion and debate, leading to a greater understanding of how people mark.



Lastly, the Joint Quality Initiative⁷ is exploring **academic consistency across Europe**.

2.14 Formal Course Review

The challenge:

- What arrangements need to be in place to ensure that the Course benefits from institutional review, independent external review¹, and from the experience of students and alumni?

The process of curriculum design has in part been addressed through the considerations of content, Bologna and ECTS. In this section the emphasis is on the process of **engaging critically, constructive external advice, so that the consortium can benefit from independent guidance**. There are three levels of Review activity, which are focused on 'local' (the students and their Institutions), National (for the Consortium and through national organisations), and European. Student consultation has been partly covered under the FLAF section 'Communicating and Consulting with Students'.

Checklist of actions:

- Design the curriculum so that it is sufficiently flexible to allow for a reasonable degree of institutional difference in the participating universities
- Plan for inevitable variations in staff availabilities over time
- Plan flexibility in the curriculum and the staff structure to cope with the unexpected
- Implement a regular system of independent external review of assessment and quality control
- Ensure that students, past and present, are active stakeholders in the ongoing process of continuous quality improvement

Examples of good practice

The formal evaluation of EMGS (European Master in Global Studies) at the University of Leipzig is done on three levels. The first assessment is done when a course is completed. The second comes at the end of each term (semester) and the third during the winter and summer schools. The evaluation instrument made available to us is in accordance with good practice standards for Erasmus Mundus. Beyond this the course at Leipzig is subject to the normal QA process applied nationally (as is probably the case for the other partners).

The NOHA Consortium has structured the process of curriculum design in a process of ongoing review. The need for constant updating and reflection, coming from teaching experience, inspired the creation of the NOHA Curriculum Development Taskforce in 2004. It is supervised by the Advisory Board and members are nominated by the Board of Directors, which has overall responsibility for the programme. It is composed of one member of the teaching staff per university.

⁷ <http://www.jointquality.nl>



On the MERIT Course, UPC in Barcelona has an established formal University-level process of **student appraisal of courses and teaching**, where there can be some impact on the salary of teaching staff if poor student appraisal is experienced consistently. The 'Education Premium', a monthly salary increase, can be given to professors every five years after positive evaluation of academic performance.

At KIT in Amsterdam, on the TROPED Course there is structured student assessment of teaching. After each lecture there is a feedback form. The information from the forms is given to lecturers on a regular basis, along with the comments. The **teachers tell the next group of students what has changed since the last course**. The feedback from core courses is discussed with students and overall Course scores are published in the Course handbook. Poor scores are discussed with the staff involved and actions planned.

At UOT (Turin), on the MERIT course, there is an annual analysis of feedback on courses from students who complete a questionnaire. There is also a Faculty **committee where issues can be discussed and degree courses modified if necessary**.

In some member states higher education QA is being built, and for EURO CULTURE in Krakow quality assurance in Universities is undertaken by a national accreditation committee, and a special unit has been created for teaching QA. There is **internal evaluation of courses by students**, with an online questionnaire in Polish being made available in English from 2011. A four-yearly **self-evaluation process** is in place for staff covering research, teaching, and administrative duties.

In the context of student evaluation there is the issue of participation rates. In the AMASE Course at Lulea there is a system already in place to record course evaluations by students, although response rates are low. Yet, students who we met praised the teaching and learning environment. The LUT quality evaluation process is complemented by the AMASE internal and external quality assessment procedures. Students are invited to complete a questionnaire at the end of the year and they receive feedback on its results. However, it is important to emphasise that **students must be sufficiently motivated by the review process to participate**.

Formal review processes at an Institution level can at the same time both contribute to good practice (if the experience is shared across the consortium) and also make consortium-wide practice more difficult, by imposing local administrative procedures on a Course. At LUT, on the AMASE Course, the University quality assurance team is pressing for more systematic documentation in the shape of the PDSA ('Plan, Do, Study, Act') model being introduced for the University as a whole. This is used to **plan with the student, conduct and to follow up and improve the programme**, together with both students and the consortium.

Internal Audits also will evaluate particular local components of a Course and for KIT in Amsterdam, on the TROPED Course, the Free University of Amsterdam carried out an internal audit of the TROPED Course in 2006, this confirmed the quality of the Course.

At the national level, for TROPED at UoC, ACE Denmark will accredit all 900 Danish academic programmes. The formal quality assessment will focus on relevance. The University is developing a central approach to quality assurance and a pilot phase is underway, where some programmes are being assessed. **Subject benchmark statements** can be developed.

Italy previously did not have a national agency responsible for overseeing quality assurance in higher education, but this is being addressed in a new system to be implemented in the sector. At UoT, on the



MERIT Course, the University has collaborated not only with the national authorities on quality assurance developments, but has also carried a range of joint QA development activity with other Italian HE institutions including those in Rome, Bologna and Ferrara, as well as activity internationally. This encompasses 'generic' QA, as well as work in the specific field of electronics.

At the consortium level, on the MERIT Course, there is a less structured process of quality assurance. Each partner trusts each other to ensure quality, but there is not a formalised consortium-level system.

For the CODE course there is a structured process for the four partner universities. **An Academic Committee works to ensure quality of course across the partner universities.** Its membership includes independent external experts and examiners. Quality assurance standards are set for each Course, supported by a 'diploma supplement' covering key elements such as procedures, outcomes, programmes and assessment.

For MESPOM there is a **yearly inter-university quality assurance review.** This activity compares the quality of teaching in the partner universities. Students are able to give comments during this process and are given feedback on the issues they raised and how they will be responded to.

A detailed insight into quality assurance structure is provided for the NOHA course. Every university has been, and is being, subjected to internal and external quality assurance systems in agreement to both institutional strategies and national requirements. At European level there is a system of quality assurance for the NOHA programme. This involves a vision of quality, where the constitutional document of the NOHA Association of Universities specifies the strategic objectives to implement its mission and vision. **Responsible Bodies for quality assurance established by the network are an Academic Standards Committee (ASC) and a Programme Evaluation Committee (PEC).** Activities include:

- Mechanisms for the Standard Committee: This committee sets out each year the materials it requires in order to implement the QA process;
- NOHA Quality Assurance Visitation Procedures or Peer Review: it involves each institution in the Network being visited by an academic from another institution;
- Students' evaluation of the programme;
- Staff evaluation – self assessment prior to peer review and report;
- Guidelines and tools, agreement on content of quality assurance at Course level and module level through 'Tuning'.

The area of structured quality assurance is a challenging one at the consortium level, because it is clear that there are so many other powerful QA processes being developed at institutional and national levels. Navigating a coherent path through these processes will remain a significant challenge for Erasmus Mundus Courses.

External QA Assessors are appointed for EUROAQUAE. There are two Assessors, one from academia and one from industry. They are external and independent, and are 'critically constructive friends' to the course. They both were linked to consortium members through a SOCRATES thematic network on water and environment. At the outset the consortium wanted a QA component, not just for academic reasons, but also because of the needs to bridge the understandings of industry (consumers of the course products) and academic (producers of the products). This formed part of the initial application to run the course submitted by Nice University. **They have formal ToR which are documented and agreed by the Management Board.**



They have developed a Handbook of QA for consortium partners to follow which has been approved by the Management Board. QA assessors feel this provides a 'solid basis' for setting out and prescribing their role.

On EUROAQUAE there is a **formal student survey which is undertaken by the External QA Assessors**. They establish the procedures to evaluate the survey. There are four schemes of evaluation: self-assessment by the 3 stakeholders (students, teachers, contractor); evaluation of all documents in the consortium (public documents for students and teachers), especially the Web site and the Programme Handbook; specific questionnaires for students and teachers regarding course modules, the organisation of the course, library, accommodation, teaching and learning; contact with the 'outside world', involving the Club of Friends for which one of them is the facilitator – this is key to finding out what the expectations and views of industrial partners are.

There are specific documents for the elements of the programme, such as training and Action 2 activities where students can spend three weeks outside the EU, and the student experience is formally evaluated. They **provide two reports each year to the Management Board. Everything is published on the Web site, so there is a trusted and transparent process.**

The QA Assessors for EUROAQUAE succeeded in persuading staff to place lecture notes on the Website. There was strong resistance in early years from staff who did not want others to see their material. They also insisted that the teachers from the different universities should meet twice a year, even though there is not formally money in the funding process to undertake this activity. **The system of quality assessment is seen as a shared one across all the partner institutions.**



3 Facilities, Logistics and Finance (FLAF)

FLAF concerns the processes of promoting the Course, targeting potential students, recruiting them, and most importantly of all, supporting them through the challenges of moving to Europe. This entails preparing them academically for the Course, ensuring that they arrive in Europe 'ready to study' with the necessary infrastructure, such as accommodation and finance in place for them. It also focuses on the speed at which students are embedded both in the locality and the academic institution. Underpinning these processes is efficient and effective information shared across the Course.

3.1 When Students Apply to Your Course

The challenge:

- Why should students from third countries apply for an Erasmus Mundus Course in Europe?
- What can courses do to persuade them and to support their applications in the face of international competition for excellent students?

A key challenge for an excellent course is getting the right students to apply, making sure that the best of them choose your course and being regarded as fair and efficient in getting things going. Success here often comes from doing the obvious and simple things early and doing them well. A key is making sure everybody knows what they have to do, and that information is provided clearly and effectively to students and course partners throughout the selection process.

Checklist of actions:

- Start the applications process early to capture the attention of the best students
- Make good quality documentation available in formats suited to the students
- Communicate the selection criteria clearly
- Use international partners as 'local' points of contact for students, both to support students and to refine the selection process
- Provide interactive support to applicants during the application and recruitment process (e.g. Skype etc.)
- Communicate decisions on applications in a clear and timely manner
- Maintain an accessible and updated website that effectively communicates the Course information to students around the World, regardless of the bandwidth of their Internet connection



In a competitive international education marketplace the task of publicising your Course (covered later) is a challenge, but so is the task of making sure that when a student applies for the Course the application is processed rapidly and that a channel of communication is opened with the student. Assume that the student is considering a range of other courses and that the challenge is to **persuade students that this is the best option for them**, not only because the curriculum is excellent, but also because the 'customer relationship' that will be provided is also world-class.

The channels of communication need to be relevant to the particular student needs. Accessing a heavily-designed Web site is not a problem for someone in Kuala Lumpur who has access to fast broadband, but accessing a complex Web site from an Internet cafe in Nepal may be more difficult if the line speed is dialup. In essence the aim is to recruit the best students from third countries in a way that is sensitive to their access to technologies, which minimises the bureaucratic overhead and maintains information integrity.

Sometimes simple Web tools can help students see quickly whether they are suited to a Course. Students have noted that it would be valuable if the Course sites provided a quick '**competence checker**' online so that they could make a reasoned decision about whether to proceed with an application. Too often they have to complete a full application and submit it before they are told whether they meet the key criteria.

Examples of good practice

For example, in the first cohort in the MERIT Course difficulties were experienced early on with computer scientists who lacked the **necessary academic background for the courses**, in particular lacking in engineering skills and knowledge. This was largely resolved by adjusting the recruitment and selection procedure. The course requires a background in hardware, but this is sometimes difficult to convey to potential students from other countries where interpretations (of 'ICT' or 'computer science') can be different.

A website can at least be used to allow **online submission of applications**, either by filling in an online form or downloading forms and sending them via email. In the MERIT Course the application of students is organised around a Web tool that has been built especially for this master. The Web tool was created by the Programme Coordinator at UPC and gives the possibility of having total control of the situation of each student record.

Students sometimes contest a decision to reject them. In that case MERIT asks the student to review the documentation already up-loaded on the online application. They are asked to review the completeness and correctness of the document and then to highlight in their CV their experience of the subjects and laboratory practice, directly related to one of the three MERIT areas of knowledge. The applications are then re-evaluated.

For the TROPED Course the application process is open and on the Web with **downloadable application forms**.

The range of selection criteria has varied between Courses and these are for very logical reasons, given the disciplinary ranges of the courses. For example:

- In the AMASE course the criteria for selecting students are: study record 25%; letter of recommendation 20%; relation to materials science 15%; language skills for the initial location 10%;



language skills for the second location 15%; motivation and experience letter 15%. Marks for each are in 5s, so the actual scale is from 1-20.

- For MERIT the criteria are: study results 30%; adequacy for the course 25%; language skills 20%; quality of home institution 15% (they use national rankings in students' countries, but also research themselves the departments in the student's countries and devise their own rankings); motivation 5%; recommendation letters 5%. We asked whether they had modelled this with differences in the loadings to see if ranking outcomes changed, but as yet this has not been done.
- TROPED criteria, where the Central Administration in Berlin processes the applications, use a grading system which includes two of 30 points, relating to whether the consortium knows the Institution from where the student is applying. There are five discretionary points for use where special capacity building is needed in a country, for example where female students apply from Afghanistan. The students selected from the initial batch are then assessed by consortium members and where the scores differ >8 points the application is discussed, with the highest and lowest scoring institutions reconsidering their evaluation. There are then telephone conferences across the consortium.

The considerable range of criteria mean that students (who will consider many potential courses, each with different criteria) will be best served by courses which communicate the criteria clearly, allow students to benchmark themselves quickly against the criteria and which respond quickly to student requests for information. For example, it is policy on the MESPOM course that **every e-mail from an applicant should be answered quickly**, to attract them to the course. So someone in IIEE, UoM and CEU must regularly check the Programme Coordinator account and respond to queries.

3.2 When Third-Country Students Travel to Europe

The challenge:

- What should be done in helping third-country students to obtain visas quickly and effectively, to plan travel and accommodation and to be advised of local culture at their destination, so that they arrive at the university ready to study?

Preparing students prior to arrival in Europe and for their subsequent internal European mobility is part of the goal of ensuring that students are not distracted from studying, by not having to worry about the challenges of living and working in a new environment. The most significant concerns relate to obtaining visas, followed by the need to secure good quality and affordable accommodation.



Actions to achieve this include:

Checklist of actions:

- Ensure that the travel (mobility) support process starts as soon as a student is recruited
- Use the knowledge gained from alumni and from former students to provide advice services for students
- Provide students with individualised integrated support for travel, accommodation and for living and working in a new cultural environment
- Ensure that students are provided with advice and support for their families, providing them with effective mechanisms to communicate with families in their home countries, and directing them to the necessary facilities and support services if their families are travelling with them to Europe
- Provide detailed assistance with visa handling
- Ensure that suitable accommodation is available to students
- Build support structures to facilitate cultural adjustment

Examples of good practice

Arriving for the first time in Europe can be both exciting and frightening. Students used a range of adjectives to describe their feelings on arrival for the EMMME course. They noted that they could feel alone, anxious, and homesick, but they also said they felt ambitious, challenged, and excited. They welcomed help on the initial words of language that they needed to use to orient themselves, and to access transport etc. For example, in Lyon an orientation dossier is provided to them in advance of arrival.

At the most general level, practice has meant that once an offer is made there is generally informal contact with students as they prepare to travel and so that they can prepare themselves academically. This is not currently a fully integrated aspect and contact with students seems more on an 'as-needed' basis.

There can be a **focus on information in relation to the programme, including practical and academic information**, such as reading lists, but this needs to be consistent across all institutions. If this is not the case it can cause problems with student expectations. For example, one problem with the high level of support provided to students at their first institution is that they may arrive at another institution in the second year of their course anticipating that they will receive the same level of support.

More sophisticated support can be developed, for example as they are recruited students can be joined to an **online virtual community**, which for MESPOM is "a Google group where students can communicate with each other before they start the course". This is an activity which not only helps pre-socialise the students, but also encourages self-help and "enables them to ask questions like how to get visas – others answer the questions (students, alumni etc) and this saves the administrative staff time".



On the EUROAQUAE course in Budapest an **'Introductory Week'** includes orientation, they are given an information pack and there is a mentoring scheme which pairs up new students with Hungarian students.

On arrival in Ghent the IMRD (International Master in Rural Development) students are described as being "already ahead of the game" in finding accommodation and the students confirmed this to us. They are then put through a series of welcome events – again consistent with **a university that has a central strategy for successful internationalisation**. Within this, however, the Erasmus Mundus students are treated as a discrete group and are cascaded through the admissions process from the Centre to the Faculty to the IMRD Programme. Outstanding permit and visa issues, finance and insurance are all managed centrally by the Secretariat.

All EMGS (European Master in Global Studies) students arriving at the University of Leipzig are provided with a welcoming service. The EMGS students arrive in Leipzig earlier than other international students and the induction process covers a period of one and half weeks. This gives an opportunity for students to deal with such issues as local registration, engaging with public transport tickets, opening a bank account, finding the right accommodation and so on. With respect to visa acquisition the students received timely information on where to go and how to apply. **Students praised the role of the administrator for being readily available to help them, and they saw their course as operating like a "family"**.

On the EMMME course in Dublin, an initial **administrative briefing** is given to students. This includes advice on PPS (Social Security) number, regularising immigration status, how to open a bank account using a letter which recommends them to a bank, because without the help students cannot usually get an address without a bank account, and cannot get a bank account without an address.

New ERM students on the EMME course in UPC Barcelona go to the International Office at University level for information about residence permits etc. They are directed towards general welfare meetings for all international students. The International Office explains about insurance, the payment of money etc. The University does give **extra support for ERM students**, particularly concerning visas, and some relating to financial support and advice – UPC will ask property owners to 'wait' for money to arrive in student accounts before expecting rent payments.

Existing students can provide a support service for incoming students. For example, with AMASE a mentoring system is in place to allow the process of integration to start before their arrival in Sweden. The mentoring system encourages students in third countries or studying at partner institutions to build email relationships with current students at LUT.

Programme Coordinators are a focal point for knowledge about mobility. In TROPED visa advice is provided to students via email. For example, Denmark requires visa applications some 3-6 months in advance and the Programme Coordinator worked to expedite the visa application.

One of the most significant concerns for students is 'where will I live'? Leaving students to arrange their own **Accommodation** can lead to them being unhappy and not fully focused on their academic studies. In some locations students told us that accommodation was fully booked by the time they were provided with application forms, and they also observed that it was generally too expensive. They want clear and timely information to be provided. Students noted that they experience significant logistical challenges in obtaining visas, registering within the local community and integrating within it for residence and services.



It can be feasible to provide students with pre-arranged, short-term accommodation on arrival, after which they can find themselves more long-term accommodation having settled at the University. On the CODE Course in Budapest students can have the option of staying with local families, something the students say helps them integrate quicker into the local community. On the MERIT Course in Turin accommodation was provided for an initial period of one month. However, students who are left to plan their own accommodation often do not have access to the **details about renting laws and local regulations**.

Furthermore, while **accommodation can be pre-arranged**, there can be problems. For instance, students noted that while it was positive that accommodation was already booked for them prior to arrival, they were not aware of the situation when renting property where the law favours the owners and tenants need to check initially for defects – the documentation was in local language and they could not find people to check it.

Another option is to provide Erasmus Mundus students with centralised accommodation, but this may then **risk excluding them from wider socialisation with other students**. Actions can be undertaken to overcome this, for example on the MESPOM Course in Manchester MESPOM students are often housed in the same accommodation. At the same time, they are **helped to integrate into the wider student community** at the University through a field trip which forms part of a compulsory module.

On the EUROAQUAE course in Newcastle, UK, students can be **met at the airport** and taken to accommodation. Induction information is provided prior to arrival, as well as on arrival for most students (2-3 days induction course), but the uneven arrival of ERM students can make it difficult to provide the same induction for all.

On the EMMME course in Dublin, arriving students are given information about accommodation. A letter is provided which **legitimises students to landlords and property agents**. Many students initially stay in a hostel and then search for other accommodation, often using the recommendations of previous students.

On the EUROAQUAE course in Newcastle the Accommodation Office **works with local landlords** to inform them about the needs of Erasmus Mundus students, and students can receive assistance in dealing with landlords. Overall the University is “aiming to internationalise all services in the University” rather than to single out international students for their own service subset.

On EUROAQUAE at Budapest the institution arranges for students to have two weeks in a hotel when they arrive. This gives them time to find private accommodation.

Universities in Barcelona as a group have sub-contracted accommodation to a private sector company. This took place nine years ago. The Agency has a commitment to offer accommodation of a minimum quality. They are increasing the quality system, but as yet there is no formal feedback process from students. Prior to this process there were too many ‘phantom’ agencies, and this does provide a form of structure for quality assurance. Barcelona is expensive for accommodation, with lots of tourism demands. Erasmus Mundus students prefer to share an apartment, and if they already know each other from their year one location there is a social bond already existing.

For TROPED in Copenhagen, accommodation information and support is available online in advance. However, it is also important to ensure that provision does not then lead to problems where, for example, on another course where the students are obliged to take the accommodation provided, students experienced high administration costs charged and the low quality of University accommodation in relation to that offered,



at a lower price, in the private sector. **Students will compare and contrast the accommodation offers and will expect value for money.**

Significant levels of personal support can be provided. For example, on the AMASE Course in Nancy students renting accommodation must have a guarantor and members of the Course team have personally acted as guarantors for many students. Therefore, in spite of the challenges and difficulties presented by local regulations, **the course team can work innovatively to make it as easy as possible for students to settle into the local community.**

In the end, however, students are reassured primarily by a situation where accommodation is ready for them to live in. It does not so much matter whether this is through the provision of University accommodation, or whether students find their own accommodation as a result of effective information and support before arrival. The core consideration for them: **'is the accommodation of suitable quality, is it affordable, are we informed of the necessary regulations and conditions. And, will we be safe living there?'**

The EuMAS course in Munich prepares students for mobility to Europe, by providing them with a list of available mobile-phone providers, and their coverage, so that **students are confident that their mobile-phones will work** as soon as they arrive in Europe. What seem like small details can have a significant impact on helping students settle into their new surroundings – being able to tell family quickly that 'I have arrived safely' reduces a major area of anxiety. The EuMAS course in Munich also **enables student communication with families**. Provide students with computer facilities that both support their academic work, and also enable them to communicate with families and friends (for example Skype, instant messaging etc.)

On the EUROAQUAE course in Newcastle, UK, there were visa issues with students coming to Newcastle several times during the course. They cannot be 'sponsored' as required by the new arrangements from the UK Borders Agency. So the University has appointed **a University-wide Visa Officer** who will construct knowledge and provide personal support for international students and staff (a large number of staff appointees require visa), as well as for visa issues related to staff and students who are travelling.

In preparing the students for arrival on the EMMME course an email is sent even before the Commission formally ratifies the admission. The email is sent by the Course Administrator in Lyon, and there is a clear line of communication with incoming students. An acceptance letter is sent to them by the Graduate Office in the partner institution which will be their first location, for example in Dublin this is **a letter that is formally recognised by the visa sections** in Irish Embassies. An email is also sent to students with a scanned copy of the letter, and the printed copy is sent via mail. But, Irish Embassies are not consistent in accepting the documentation, but the situation is improving (very much in the line of many courses who are constantly 'reducing the unevenness' of practice in areas relevant to Erasmus Mundus).

However, problems remain with visas, and this is an area where Erasmus Mundus courses provide significant support for their applicants. For example in Ireland students face extra visa costs. For a Russian students travelling to Ireland the visa cost is €70, but the Irish authorities only issue a single-entry visa. Once in Ireland registration is required with the Garda (Police) costing €150. Students then have to apply for a multiple-entry visa, at an additional cost of €100.

Structured advice and support is also provided to **help students register in their institutions** and localities. The difficulties of understanding language (not all administrative staff are proficient in English), in



understanding the bureaucratic and administrative structures, and general ‘culture shock’ mean that students can easily become confused. On the EuMAS course in Munich staff accompany students during the formal university registration process at the start of their mobility, so ensuring that there are no problems with language between students and administrative staff.

The EUROAQUAE course has an **agreement with a local bank** in Nice, which has a network of branches across the EU, so once students have the account they can access it from any of the other locations they will stay in during the course.

On the FUSION-EP course at Ghent the University has a central page for international students which covers travel, visas, and arrival issues such as local registration (with links to relevant pages where students can download relevant forms and guidelines), along with course timetables and staff information, and a wide-range of other information about the University and the locality.

On EURO CULTURE as soon as students are accepted they are sent documentation, a letter of acceptance, and the process of their visa applications etc. is monitored regularly. In Poland the **National Structure informs the Ministry of Foreign Affairs when the student selection is made**, and they send lists to embassies. That does not guarantee special treatment for Erasmus Mundus students.

The DILL course uses the communication channels familiar to students. Before arrival in Oslo students could **view online videos** to become familiar with the airport and city – Google Earth and Google Street View also are excellent resources. Incoming students also **communicate with existing students via Facebook, Skype** etc. The Estonian partner **assigns a ‘personal tutor’ to international student**, and the tutor is an Estonian Student. This person will **meet the international students on arrival in Estonia** (at the airport, station, ferry terminal etc.), takes them to their residence, and provides a personal link throughout their time in Tallinn. The tutor will be assigned to 4-6 students. This activity is voluntary, but the Estonian students are provided with training and they understand that the process helps them **establish a personal international network**.

EURO CULTURE in Groningen puts in place support that acknowledges the distance that Groningen is from Amsterdam Schiphol Airport. Most students will arrive at Schiphol Airport, which is 2.5 hours train journey from Groningen. Students can be **met at Schiphol via an organisation that the University works with**, and information is provided to them about the airport and the transport connections. **Each student has a mentor who will meet them at Groningen station** and take them to their accommodation. Each faculty has a contact with the University Housing Office, which is a private company that is contracted to provide guaranteed accommodation for students.

3.3 Introducing Students to Living and Studying in Europe

The challenge:

- How can a diverse community of third country students be provided with an induction programme that trains them into the academic practices of a European University?

Whatever the academic practices have been for third country students, they need to be assimilated rapidly into the learning and teaching cultures that they will experience in Europe. A formal induction programme will



train them to learn independently and to use learning resources effectively. Importantly, the induction programme will be informed by the previous experience of students, so that past problems can be avoided.

Checklist of actions:

- Provide a clear induction process through briefings and through documentation that is readily available to students before arrival
- Ensure that the induction process has clear mechanisms in place to capture the views students
- Make the induction process culturally sensitive enough to meet students' social and cultural needs
- Ensure that the induction process prepares the diverse students for the learning environment
- Provide opportunities for international learning so that students and staff enrich their learning and teaching skills by experiencing academic practices from other countries
- Implement student agreements that state clearly the rights, and the obligations, of students and staff when participating in the Course

Once students arrive they need to be inducted into the Course, institution and the community. An integrated package of support can be provided, such as that in Trento for CODE students, where a **comprehensive package of support is provided to welcome and support students before, throughout and after their rotation at each university**. Students are enrolled prior to arrival, they receive Internet access and library card etc. on arrival. There is a dedicated person available to address personal/practical problems or signpost students to appropriate support. Practical information is provided to integrate students in each city/country, as well as to link with local students. There is support in dealing with immigration authorities, banks, embassies and the EC delegation in home country.

Academic induction can take the form of an **initial intensive programme of activities**, as in the NOHA Course where the programme starts with the Intensive Programme. This ten day initial inter-university joint course brings together NOHA students, lecturers, researchers, international experts, aid managers, policy makers and other guest speakers, IGOs and NGOs. The programme combines theory (lecture style) and practice (workshops and case studies) allowing the discussion of key humanitarian action issues from the perspective of academics and actors in the field. The programme provides **a forum where participants from different backgrounds and perspectives can share their knowledge and experiences** in the area of humanitarian action.

Universities characteristically start to engage with students when they arrive in a Department. Prior to that, other services such as Accommodation or International Offices will provide some level of advice and guidance. When this process is viewed in the context of the question '**What were your feelings as you stepped off a plane for the first time in Europe?**', and 'When you left immigration with your luggage how prepared were you for the next stage of your journey to the University?', it becomes clear that these activities need to start as soon as students are recruited.

The goal is '**Making available welcome processes that students feel safe, secure, and ready to study**'. Many students said they were frightened about whether the visa would allow them through immigration. Many



were distressed at leaving behind family. They were uncertain about how they would make their way from the airport to the University, having knowledge of only a few words of local language. However, they said that once they were at the University the assistance and advice provided was good.

The point at which the Course first ‘meets’ the students has a significant influence on the extent to which students can focus fully on their studies. Email communication is a basic mechanism, for example, one of the MERIT team at UC Louvain sends incoming students an email with information about local transport and University services. Students can be met and briefed as soon as they arrive at a University. For example, on their first morning in Nancy students meet the course tutor who gives them information such as IT facilities and email addresses. Students can also be encouraged to engage with central resources in Nancy. For instance, the Student Association at the University supports foreign students by recommending accommodation and the University also has a centre where foreign students can go for advice and support.

Students, however, feel at their most vulnerable when they first arrive in Europe. Sending information to students is a basic activity, but actually making the information ‘work’ effectively is challenging; an online map of an airport is no substitute for someone actually meeting them and reassuring them that the journey to the University will be without stress. Knowing that a bus can be taken from a train station is only useful if the precise route to the bus stop is known, and that the student is aware of any dangers that often are present around train stations. Students welcome coordinated support in preparing for their visit, but in some places when they arrived in the City they had to apply themselves for a resident card without understanding the procedures.

International Offices are an important source of support, but often they are not very experienced in dealing with third country students, because most international students they deal with are Europeans. They therefore need to develop a specific set of actions which have not been structured for third country students. For CODE students in Trento, the University arranges ‘**welcome buddies**’, where a home student makes contact before arrival and helps the Erasmus Mundus student settle in. A ‘caffè delle Lingua’ is provided, with **a café setting for international students to informally present their home countries and cuisine**. There is a regular newsletter highlighting news and ongoing support; students receive this when abroad, for example at the rotation university, or during an internship.

For TROPED students in Copenhagen from September 2008 onwards, the Faculty sponsored a ‘buddy’ for international students. This person is responsible for 11 activities, including meeting students at the airport, taking them to accommodation, guiding them in registering for medical care and general orientation in the city and University. **The ‘buddy’ will have a contract, and will be paid a fee.**

On arrival in Padua SAHC students go directly to the **International Relations Office** which helps them to deal with administrative issues, and then provides a Welcome Week of activities prior to the start of teaching. The SASSA student service is an interface between the University and the Police, and is an agreement between the municipality, the provincial authority and the police. It is the first such service in Italy and resolves visa and permit problems (such as accompanying dependants) and it uses national contact points and has direct contact also with the Foreign Affairs Ministry.

Once on site at the University the next activity for the Course is to **brief the students about local issues and to introduce them to the University resources** that they will use. This does not necessarily have to be a formal process. For instance, in the case of MERIT students in Turin, we were told by students that people in the University and in Turin in general, were very helpful and students felt well integrated. An informal



process can work well with small numbers of students, but more formal practice has value, such as the Handbook for arriving students at the AMASE course in Saarbrücken.

For TROPED students there is a **pan-Course induction meeting** held in Berlin. All students and staff from each partner site are brought together and students value this social opportunity to integrate into the course. The induction activity starts at the airport (or other point of arrival), where students are met and greeted. They are then taken to the accommodation and provided with orientation in Berlin. In addition, they receive academic preparation which helps them to **overcome anxiety about teaching styles**, the mix of people and the challenges of social interaction. Many students were not used to cultures where a lot of self-learning was undertaken and need **structured training in self-learning skills**.

Lastly, the range of introductory activities can lead to innovative outcomes. On arrival in Tallinn, DILL students are given a **welcome bag** containing material such as literature about Tallinn and the University, a University diary. The first week in Tallinn is focused on orientation, with a tour of the City, the Library, and registering with health and police. They meet the staff who will teach and look after them in the Institute, and are given details **of Study Assistants who can provide practical help during their studies**. A welcome reception is provided, where all the national flags of the students are displayed (33 countries so far). Students are encouraged to talk about their home country and home university, and this helps Estonian students to become more knowledgeable internationally. An International Club exists as part of the Student Union, and arranges events such as museum visits, walking and hiking activities, and cultural excursions. One particular event involves chartering the Ferry to Stockholm and all international students are particularly encouraged to participate in this event. There is a **'cooking event' in the Spring semester, where students are encouraged to cook a national dish** to be shared by the others. This is leading to the publication of an 'Erasmus Cookbook'⁸.

3.4 When Students Move Between Partner Institutions

The challenge:

- How can students move from one institution to another, so that they assimilate rapidly to the new local environment and experience a seamless transition in their learning?

Students need to move between institutions in a way that avoids academic culture shock. While the diversity of academic cultures in Europe is part of its richness, students must be prepared for what they will experience. Furthermore, as with the mobility to Europe, their internal mobility needs to be prepared efficiently and the process of obtaining visas for their next destination should not require them to be distracted from their studies.

⁸ <https://www.tlu.ee/files/arts/54/Erasmd97feaaa93862abbf50b29f645441f1d.pdf>



Checklist of actions:

- Assist students coherently in making the necessary transitions from institution to institution, from the provision of accommodation to ensuring the sufficient stability of the learning environment to support their learning
- Provide well-informed assistance with visa handing for students
- Provide students with good quality and timely information about the institutions they are to visit and the particular local issues that will affect them
- Ensure that the experiences of current and past students, on the inter-institutional movement process, have been recovered and embedded in the information provided to new students
- Avoid unnecessary student travel by ensuring that students who fail examinations at one institution are able to re-take the examination whilst at another institution

Getting to the EU is a logistical, and expensive, challenge for Third Country students. This is something that the European Parliament has been aware of as the debates have been taking place for the next phase of Erasmus Mundus. For students, the processes required to obtain visas are challenging. As EU citizens we are now familiar with the ease of movement through Schengen, however, for third country students the intra-Schengen boundaries are very real, and while EU Passport holders can move seamlessly across the borders, those from Third Countries have very real challenges moving across Schengen borders, and students often noted the challenges of complying with local bureaucracy such as local registration, banking, and health registration.

Each EU member state has its own immigration procedures and processes and there is a double overhead for many students applying for two sets of visas for two countries. For example, a Pakistani student spending the second year in Italy needs to apply for an Italian visa in Madrid, a process that is both expensive and time-consuming.

There is a definite attraction for students to go to the USA (where the visa application may be time-consuming, but one visa only is required), and there is a danger that the post 9-11 'windfall' of students for Europe (many came to Europe as the USA increased the difficulty of applying for visa under Homeland Security restrictions) may be reversed soon, making Europe less attractive.

This critical mobility issue is well known and was specifically mentioned in the Communication of August 2008:

"The complicated migration rules which are continually being changed (and becoming increasingly inflexible) constitute another problem to bear in mind in relation to academics and students from third countries. In no way can or should this constitute grounds for impeding the mobility of lecturers, researchers or students. In particular, the European Council resolution on granting visas to students and teachers involved in this type of programme should be finalised".⁹

⁹ EUROPE. (2008). *European Parliament and of the Council establishing an action programme for the enhancement of quality in higher education and the promotion of intercultural understanding through cooperation*



Because of the timing and academic cycles, a 2.5 year visa would be appropriate for Erasmus Mundus students. Whereas in the EU a visa is generally issued for two years, in the US it is normal to provide five-year visas (even for a course lasting two years). The European Parliament Decision for Erasmus Mundus Phase 2¹⁰ understood these concerns and considered the possibility of implementing specific "Erasmus Mundus visas".

It is also clear that **Course teams are aware of visa problems and that considerable efforts are put into helping students overcome these**. Course administrators can assist with practical issues concerning visa applications. Senior University Officers can communicate issues to politicians. For example, the Vice-Rector at UP Catalunya, for the MERIT Course, noted that there are regular 'visa nightmares' and that the Rectors of Catalan Universities were all concerned about the negative impact on international students. They have been talking to the Police and Security authorities, but in the end they have been told it is the staff of the embassies who control the process, and for example the Spanish Consulate in Shanghai reported that they have difficulties in differentiating legitimate and forged documents due to the large amount of applications (overload) and scarce resources.

Programme Coordinators can provide guidance and support through formal communications, such as in the AMASE Course students told us of significant problems in obtaining visas to study in Europe and also noted how course teams at different locations had assisted them in overcoming problems. In Lulea the course team helped them to apply for a French visa. When first going to Lulea students from Malaysia and Vietnam said they were given an offer letter which they took to the Swedish Embassy in their home country.

Students in all courses were vociferous about the extent to which they **experienced problems with visa applications**, even extending in some cases to a requirement by the second year country that students return to their home country in Asia to apply for the visa. An Australian student we met in Ireland applied in Dublin to the Spanish Embassy for a visa to go to Barcelona. The embassy told the student to go back to Australia and apply there. The student contacted the Australian delegation to the EU, and they talked to the Spanish Ambassador, and the Embassy agreed to issue a visa in Dublin.

3.5 Student Support – Facilities and Finances

The challenge:

- How can the Course ensure that the finance is allocated according to academic priorities, that students do not experience financial hardship, and help students to avoid confusion regarding local regulations?
- How can the Course provide students with consistent and coherent access to Library and other learning resources?

with third countries (Erasmus Mundus) (2009-2013). ((2008/C 204/18), August 9) European Commission, [cited August 16 2008]. <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2008:204:0085:0088:EN:PDF>
¹⁰ EUROPE. (2007d). Proposal for a DECISION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL establishing an action programme for the enhancement of quality in HE and the promotion of intercultural understanding through co-operation with Third Countries (Erasmus Mundus) (2009-2013). (COM(2007) 395 final, July 12) European Commission, [cited August 6 2008]. http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/mundus/doc/com395_en.pdf



The allocation of finance in most courses is undertaken by simple division among the partners. However, an excellent course works within the constraints of institutional practice (and the practice also can be national, such as that in Scandinavian countries where course fees are not permitted) to allocate the finance on the basis of the academic needs and priorities of the course.

In addition, whatever the level of finance paid to students through their scholarship, there is often a time-lag between them being required to pay in advance of arriving in Europe (for example for accommodation) and actually receiving their scholarship money. That also links to the need for them to obtain bank accounts into which the scholarship can be paid and to register for local essential services such as doctors.

Money matters in attracting the best third-country students, but so does receiving assistance in **helping students cope with the uneven flow of money** and with **the challenge of learning a new language as well as studying in a different academic and cultural environment**. In this context both the Departments and the Institutions can enhance the student experience.

The challenge:

- Allocate the finance transparently and efficiently across the institutions so that the money is linked to the delivery of the Course objectives
- During the recruitment and induction processes, inform and support students in areas of finance and financial management
- Provide interventions for, any particular issues such as insurances (health or others required by national legislation) and local residency regulations, that might be confronted by students
- Organise in advance the financial distribution mechanisms among partners
- Prepare the banking facilities/arrangements for the third-country students before arrival
- Ensure that the EU insurance scheme is comprehensive enough and if not, prepare for additional social security coverage
- Allowing students to maintain access to Library resources after they have moved to their next mobility location

Examples of good practice

The EMGS (European Master in Global Studies) consortium charges a common tuition fee of €5,100 a year to non-EU students and €3,600 for EU-nationals. The fees cover students' participation in all teaching and learning activities as well as an overhead charge for administrative support and organisation. In the case of the University of Leipzig, for current year there are 8 Category A scholarships (these include a single travel allowance of €8,000 and living allowance of € 1,000 per month) and two Category B scholarships (these comprise a single travel allowance of € 3,000 and living costs of €500 per month). A further 2 Category A



grants and 6 Category B grants covering tuition fees are dedicated to nationals from the Western Balkans and Turkey.

There are also a number of "fee waivers" applied as part of the Erasmus Mundus package. Currently some 30 of these at €2,300 per year is available. They are open to all students who apply for EMGS and wish to study at the University of Leipzig, Roskilde University, the University of Vienna or the University of Wroclaw. Study at the LSE is excluded from these waivers. Students not receiving an Erasmus Mundus scholarship and studying at the universities of Leipzig, Roskilde, Vienna and Wroclaw can also apply for up to one year from an Erasmus grant worth approximately €150 a month. The consortium does attract a large number (unspecified) of students willing to pay the full tuition fee of €5,100/year

Financial issues on all Erasmus Mundus courses concern scholarship levels and their relative value to students in each country. Another financial consideration is the provision of financial assistance to the students. When considering, the Erasmus Mundus Course students noted that the USA remains a more attractive academic option. Important criteria that encouraged them to select Europe were: the scholarship amount; the course content and scholarship levels; a clear match of the course to the student's own intended career area; a clear entry possibility into PhD research, the double degree; and the chance to live and study in two countries.

There is a finite pool of scholarships. However it may be possible to expand the opportunities for more students by securing other funding. For example in the MERIT course at UP Catalunya, with regard to scholarships, non-EU students receive €21k per year. A regional bank offers studentships at €1370/month plus €630 installation and student fees. An internal scholarship fund is provided by institutions, with 3 per institution (12 in total for the course), based on ranking the reserve list. This covers course fees. MERIT provides support to students in applying for scholarships.

The **relative cost of living between different countries has a direct impact on the value of the scholarship** for students on Erasmus Mundus Courses. This is especially the case in countries such as Sweden, where no tuition fees are applied and the level of the Erasmus Mundus grant appears relatively high, at €21,000. However, the Erasmus Mundus Programme was designed by the Commission to operate using a flat rate, so that the administrative burden in distributing grants is not too onerous. Consequently, students on courses where course fees are applied may feel that their grant is 'worth' less than students on courses where fees are not charged across all partner sites. In light of this, students need to be informed of the reasons for the disparities and reassured that in spite of these they are being delivered value across the consortium.

Of rather more direct concern to students is **the stage at which they can actually access their scholarship money**. Some significant costs (such as bonds for accommodation) can be required before students arrive in Europe and the bureaucratic process involved in authorising payments can result in late access to finance. Universities can be proactive in minimising the impact on their students. The NOHA Course at University of Dublin puts great care into the well-being of its students and ensures that the Erasmus Mundus student grant is paid to students, even if the EU has not paid the University yet.

On the same Course at University of Groningen, **the University pre-finances the transfer of grants to Erasmus Mundus students on a monthly basis**. Flight cost can also, on request, be advanced by the University for Erasmus Mundus students and the costs are then deducted from their grant allocation.



Underpinning the students' ability to focus on their studies, are quality processes that ensure their general well-being. The many **national and local practices for registration in the local community** mean that students can find it challenging when registering with local services. Students noted that they experience significant logistical challenges in registering within the local community and integrating within it, and for residence and services.

It may be possible to deal centrally with health insurance, and this is the case in the NOHA Course at University of Dublin the health insurance is compulsory for the students, and is organised by the University.

It is important to **make sure that students are prepared for some of the complexities and idiosyncrasies of local regulations**. For example, in one country students informed us of requirements for third country students to obtain a medical certificate proving that they do not have a number of diseases, but the certificate is only available after consultation with a local doctor. This is patently illogical, if an EU resident with tuberculosis can travel freely around Europe and when the students are not allowed to obtain a medical certificate in their home country to show that they are clear of disease. Students argued that those who have a disease will have infected people between the time of arrival and seeing a doctor.

Getting to Europe is a problem. Becoming legally settled into the local community also is a challenge, and again the students have to negotiate a multitude of different **local registration requirements**. MERIT students in Turin told us that the issue of residence permits was a source of concern, because of the long delays often experienced in obtaining it. Lacking a permit means students cannot travel outside Italy. While the University did all it could, the permits were issued centrally and delays sometimes meant permits were received only just before the end of the mobility period in Italy.

Students in many locations noted **big challenges in opening bank accounts** (which require evidence of accommodation and bills from services such as electricity), and registering for local services. It is to the credit of many Programme Coordinators that they invest so much time and effort into helping students to overcome the many mobility challenges, but as the European Parliament Communication shows, it requires more central strategic attention.

Having a working bank account is one thing, having adequate funds in the account is another challenge. **Helping students to manage finances effectively** can be beneficial. In Lyon on the EMMME course students receive financial advice, and their scholarship money is always in their bank account on the 20th of each month. The course administrator provides practical information and support for the students personally, and directs students towards banks, insurance companies etc. In August the department gives students money for August and September as cash advances, even though the first official payment is September. The amount credited to the students each month is phased, and the June payment is larger, and this helps them budget for the return home during the summer.

On the EMMME course in UPC Barcelona double money is provided in month 1 to cope with extra bills and deposits for accommodation. Advice provided about budgeting over the summer vacation between years 1 and 2.

Lastly, Courses need to **prepare students well in advance for the formal processes of approval by the Commission**. On one course we were told of two good students who were lost due to late decisions by the Commission, although the new Phase 2 of Erasmus Mundus is addressing this through a faster decision-



making process. Also, in 2007 a student from Cuba gave up trying due to logistical and bureaucratic problems in securing permission.

Library and learning resources tend to be viewed by most institutions as being accessible to students when they are 'registered for study' at that location. Many institutions therefore regard Erasmus Mundus students as 'temporary residents' and their registration at that institution lasts only as long as their mobility – and they therefore have access to the institutional learning resources while they are registered. The idea that Erasmus Mundus students could be registered at all mobility locations for the duration of the course is still something that challenged institutional practice.

One innovative example is on SAHC at Minho. Minho has a 'creative commons' and globally available repository of staff material, theses and publications. "RepositóriUM is the University of Minho Institutional Repository and contains a growing collection of the scientific output from the University. The aim of RepositóriUM is to provide a permanent record of the research output of the University and maximise the visibility, usage and impact of this research through open access". This is a resource that is 'found' by Google Scholar, and it provides an important resource that alumni in particular can use.

On the MA-LLL course in London students retain access to the IoE Library resources when they go on their mobility to Spain. The Library also has the facility for students to pay for books to be dispatched to them (at the cost of dispatch) if they are away from London.

3.6 Communicating and Consulting with Students

The challenge:

- What processes and procedures are needed to ensure that there is consistent communication and consultation that is coherent across the consortium?

Excellent students from third countries have much to **contribute to further developing the excellence of a course**. The students are often more mature than domestic students, they have much more experience of international studying, and they are generally very focused on obtaining the maximum value from their studies.

Therefore Courses need to **plan and implement robust student consultation across the consortium**, using **communication channels** that students most prefer. Furthermore, the consultation needs to result in **demonstrable outcomes** that are relevant to enhancing the learning and teaching environment for the students.



Checklist of actions:

- Implement efficient systems to support learning and student-based Course evaluation
- Create opportunities for dialogue with students, and value the perception of students about the usefulness of information systems, with equal weight to that of teaching staff
- The information system in place is 'fit for purpose' and regularly reviewed, it is timely, accurate and regularly updated
- Consult students regularly about the effectiveness of the support provided to them

At the most general level Courses can informally consult with students, but that only generates unstructured and general outcomes. While there may be an 'open door' policy of access to staff, and occasional staff-student consultation meetings, they provide little differentiation across teaching, learning, and curriculum content. They certainly do not help to identify any uneven standards across the consortium.

Examples of good practice

At the personal level, student evaluation requires a clear line of communication. For instance, in MERIT at UoT there is a '**Student ombudsman**' who is formally a component of QA activity and takes their authority from students and colleagues to address any aspects that are not working.

The next level is one of process, where **the nature of the consultation needs to link to outcomes that have value to students**. There is little point in students completing questionnaires about the Course modules, only to receive limited feedback and to be told that the feedback is only assessed locally because there is no formal University process of Course evaluation. This does not encourage students to engage with the evaluation process and as a result, response rates will be low.

So, student assessment should be linked to outcomes relevant to the students and to benefit future students. It should be anonymous and collected effectively. For example, in Budapest for MESPOM students, student feedback was originally collected on paper, but now **student feedback is collected online via 'Survey Monkey' software**.

For MERIT at Turin the student contribution has clear linkage to outcomes for the staff and anonymous student surveys are used. The student survey system has been in place for more than 15 years. Institutionally, **the performance of individual professors is monitored and appropriate measures are taken where there are problems**. There is **an institutional board for the evaluation of student feedback that includes student representatives**. The explanations provided showed clearly that this analysis of the data results in concrete reactions from the deans of the faculties, for example in the case of staff underperformance.

For AMASE there is a pan-consortium process. Saarbrücken (UoS) has developed a pan-AMASE questionnaire and students who went to UoS were given a presentation of the results. The impression given is that the Erasmus Mundus students are more constructive in their views than EU domestic students.

A EUROAQUAE the **student consultation is consistent across all course partners**. An assessment questionnaire is provided to collect feedback from students. All surveys are anonymous and were online (via



a secure server) from 2009 onwards. All course elements are assessed by students, using a ranking of 1-5. They may also contribute comments. The surveys include questions on a wide range of topics including motivation and preparation (i.e. not just about academic modules). A synthesis of results (by semester and location) is included in the QA progress report. Teachers are asked for feedback too, using the system, allowing them to comment on the quality of students as well. Reports are provided to the Management Board then partners have to provide a response where a problem has been identified. The team is working on ways to capture more feedback from industry on internships.

MA-LLL in Copenhagen has student feedback which is formally structured. Students provide an overall evaluation at the end of semester one, which is **summarised and communicated to students along with individual meetings with all students**. The approach to the evaluation results is therefore qualitative and constructive, rather than relying on statistical summaries of a small sample. There also is a meeting with a student representative who can **communicate generic issues**. There is an institutional evaluation of all courses and the end of each semester. Student representatives participate in and present student issues to the Steering Committee in all steering committee meetings.

3.7 Benefitting from Alumni

The challenge:

- How can past students remain embedded in the development of the Course and how can their experience be recovered so that current students can benefit?

An Alumni Association can risk being a passive list of past students who occasionally meet at events. Of more importance is to ensure that **past students retain an identifiable commitment to the course**, through activities such as securing sponsorship, finance, providing opportunities for placements and recruiting students.

Furthermore, past students can feed back their experience of the Course as an entity (as opposed to conventional student consultation at each Course site) and can provide guidance on policy and business trends that help the course to **keep the curriculum at the research and application frontier**.

Checklist of actions:

- Put a system in place to build, and manage, a sustainable alumni association for graduates of the Course
- Ensure that the alumni association in place is active and is 'fit for purpose'; for example, providing facilities for career advice and dealing with 'post-course' issues are in place as part of Course administration



Examples of good practice

Alumni are a rich source of support for current students and alumni can also enrich a Course through the contacts and skills they can contribute as they develop their careers. The NOHA Alumni Association supports students well after they have finished their programme and offers information about different aspects, such as employment offers. It can also serve as a useful contact point for students who are moving to a new destination and can learn about NOHA students in the area where they are going.

The role of an individual Course Alumni Association is noted elsewhere in this document, for example in providing assistance in internships. At the level of the Erasmus Mundus Alumni Association, who provided excellent students to accompany us on our visits, course students have also suggested that a wider service function is developed to coordinate advice about such issues as visas and mobility across the whole programme.

The students we met regard the Erasmus Mundus Alumni Association more as a consultative forum. Student representatives attend meetings of the Association. They seek views from their peers locally, although they often receive little response from other students. Instead the students encourage the Alumni Association to become an organisation that focuses on services to its stakeholders. They see **value in it coordinating information relating to visas and mobility, in sharing information across students and in communicating student problems to the Commission**, in a way that generates action.

The EUROAQUAE course **Alumni Association is active in the process of career development for current students**, and participates in mock interviews. Members of the Association are often working in the key companies who will take placements and recruit students. Nice provides the Association with space on a Web server. Alumni are firmly embedded into the quality process.

The EUROAQUE Alumni Association is supported formally (i.e. funded) by the department at Nice and plays a key role in sharing knowledge from past experience and in promoting the course. This includes providing a **one-to-one mentor (a previous student) for each new student**. The association is fully involved in most aspects of the course, although it has taken time to build up to this situation (five years). The Alumni association is strongly linked to the professional sector, and this helps students to secure employment after graduation.

An EMGS (European Master in Global Studies) alumni association exists. It aims at keeping a close relationship both to the graduated and newly enrolled students of EMGS and to the Faculty of EMGS to exchange ideas and to develop further projects. A first alumni meeting was held at the beginning of June 2009 in Leipzig with the participation of current students of the programme in order to strengthen the network between graduates and fellows. The second alumni's meeting is scheduled to take place in November 2010 in Vienna. **EMGS students also maintaining the forum "Globalistan" which should allow people all over the world to share the way they see the world.**



3.8 E-Learning Strategy

The challenge:

- To provide all students with a coherent and consistent access to all learning and teaching resources across the entire consortium, regardless of student mobility paths

Students in the Information Society expect to access resources regardless of location. They communicate via email, social networks, and internet telephony. They are familiar with resources that are available in multiple electronic formats (documents, presentations, images, spreadsheets, databases etc.).

However, institutions in the Information Society still construct ‘borders’ around teaching and learning resources. Academics may regard teaching materials as their own intellectual property. Institutions provide access to Libraries only while a student is registered at that institutional location. And, institutions may have a very informal attitude towards staff using electronic teaching resources – while electronic teaching and learning platforms may be available, there may not be an institutional mandate that they are used.

Checklist of actions:

- Plan for the online availability of teaching and learning resources across the consortium
- Plan to maximise the consistency of style for key learning resources such as lecture notes, bibliographies etc.
- Develop an online course resource of key online material (either documents, or well-maintained links to documents).

Examples of good practice

Some courses have developed ‘in-house’ solutions to overcome organisational ‘borders’. On the EMMME course in Lyon **Moodle is used as repository** which can be accessed by students even after they leave to the second institution. Students can find in this repository the Power-point presentations used in the classes. This helps on providing students accessibility to different sources of learning material, independently of where they are attending classes. However, this facility is open only after a student has been registered at Lyon.

Providing accessibility to all available learning material in the three places, regardless of where students are, would help giving students a truly sense of integration in a joint programme, and this must be a key goal for Erasmus Mundus courses. On the SAHC course **each partner has an e-learning system, and there is a dedicated SAHC Intranet** which is available to alumni as well as current students, so in this case there is an in-house attempt to join-up some key resources directly.



For some institutions Erasmus Mundus directly challenges them about the delivery of e-resources. On the IMQP course in Tomar Erasmus Mundus is important on helping the University to pioneer innovative teaching and learning – it is in effect **a test-bed for teaching innovation**. For example, developing processes of sharing information (IPR issues relating to teaching materials for example, and acknowledging the porous borders of knowledge), in developing e-Education and distance learning (understanding for example that **students can self-organise teaching resources using resources such as Moodle**, as they have on this course with a structured library of PDF and document – where the course team have advised the students also about copyright and IPR issues), in implementing organisational change (driving forward flexibility in regulation and practice), and overall in helping universities to make the transition from being spatially-grounded institutions to being global and mobile institutions. Lectures are available online so that students at all partner locations can experience the teaching across the consortium. The course material is structured to be as common as possible at all locations, and 40 people were involved in the curriculum and teaching material design.

On the DILL course **the consortium uses the best practice among partners and makes this the consortium e-learning platform**. Tallinn has an online e-learning facility – the Learning Management System IVA. It is locally developed using open-source methodologies, and has been made available for any other institution to use. It has three main facilities:

- BookShelf, a space and tools for providing context for meaningful learning;
- WebTop, a space and tools for personal knowledge construction and reflection;
- WorkShops, a space and tools for student collaboration and group communication.

The development of IVA started in 2003 and it underpins the delivery of teaching and learning resources in both Tallinn and Parma. All three partners use jointly IVA for teaching purposes. IVA is also used to download students' applications and documents to make pre-selections in the selection process. All course materials are online, and use a standard structure (Learning objectives, Study Guide, Lecture Slides, Literature, Assignments, Useful links and resources etc.). Student work is submitted and returned with marks and comments online etc.) in Tallinn, and is accessible for DILL students throughout their time in Europe. Access to staff in the future will be primarily gained through IVA, because many staff not have permanent offices when a new building is finished and will hot-desk when they are actually in the Department. Students also hot-desk, so there are few fixed locations of work. DILL students can also use the University electronic room reservation system to book rooms for meetings and work.

A similar approach is taken by the WOP-P course. **The main system used across the WOP-P course is an intranet platform supported by the University of Valencia**: this embodies the 'aula virtual' system (a university-wide project still undergoing development). The platform contains:

- An area for general coordination issues: Dedicated to the coordinators of all the universities of the consortium and to technical staff;
- An area for coordination issues in teaching: Dedicated to coordinators and technical staff;
- Teaching Staff Restricted Area: Created for sharing information and material between all the teaching staff (across the whole consortium). Dedicated to coordinators, teaching staff from all 5 Universities and technical staff;
- Student Restricted Area: Created for sharing information between students (whole consortium) and alumni. Dedicated to coordinators, students and alumni from the 5 Universities, and technical staff;



- An area supporting the Joint Intensive Learning Unit (Winter School). In this case the aula virtual works as a support platform to share information about the students, to upload material for them and have access to the assignments delivered by them. Dedicated to coordinators, teaching staff of the Winter School and students from the five Universities.



4 Quality of Leadership and Institutions (QUIL)

QUIL concerns the people who make the Course a success – the students and the staff. A Course is of little value unless it attracts and energises students of the highest quality. This requires a detailed understanding of why students may apply for the course, effective assessment and approval their applications using the most robust information possible, ensuring that their cultural differences contribute to a well-integrated student community and working with the students to deliver value that leads to successful career paths.

From the staff perspective there is the assembling of a high quality team, with research and teaching competences that are successful across cultural boundaries. The construction of an Erasmus Mundus Course is further enabled by specific leadership qualities in key personnel. Leadership is a key mechanism to ‘glue together’ the consortium and also provides strategic direction in the future sustainability of the Course. Supporting the staff will be Institutional policies and practices that demonstrate clearly that an Erasmus Mundus Course is both valued by the institutions and that participating in the Course will have a direct impact on staff career paths.

4.1 The Highest Quality Academic Team

The challenge:

- How can we recruit the best staff from across the consortium to teach on the Erasmus Mundus Course?

This is not as simple as it sounds. The best researchers often have significant demand on their time that means they prioritise research over teaching, and to secure their participation in teaching the course the consortium needs to develop strategies that **engage and retain research and teaching excellence**.

Checklist of actions:

- Secure the highest quality staff from the relevant disciplines across the institutions
- Build an Erasmus Mundus academic quality cluster with research as well as teaching and administration credentials

Academics with strong research and teaching competencies, who have strong research links with industry and business, and who can work across institutional and cultural boundaries, **are an ‘a priori’ requirement for a successful Master Course**.

Examples of good practice

The value that this delivers is evident on the MESPOM Course. All the **partners have experience in delivering courses to international students and working together enables the exploitation of**



synergies, to create a high quality (excellent) Course. For example, by studying in a mix of European locations, students are able to gain different perspectives (Western, Northern, Central and Southern European) on the subject. This is a particular attraction in comparison to studying in America.

The act of building these diverse competencies into a 'course identity' is what then makes it possible to deliver not just a successful Master course, but a successful Erasmus Mundus Master Course. For the MERIT consortium, their joint membership of the Cluster.org¹¹ meant that **the consortium was already 'socialised' and could then accelerate the planning and delivery of an international Course**. Cluster.org membership helped them to produce a competence matrix for the Course members, covering teaching, research and project involvement. UPC also uses this to develop collaboration with other universities, such as a dual degree with Georgia Tech (USA) and the UPC Faculty of Informatics. China is now a major target area for collaboration.

The IMRD (International Master in Rural Development) course at Ghent presents an **evolutionary model in partnership building**. It developed from an original set of seven institutional players – Ghent, Agro-Campus Ovest (Fr), Humboldt (De), Wageningen (Ne), Cordoba (Es), Nitra (Slo), and Pisa (It). In 2010-2011 it is being joined by universities in China, Ecuador, India and South Africa. The group came together for Erasmus Mundus at the beginning of the programme in 2004 and successfully re-bid for a second edition. Currently the core players for IMRD are those offering the Joint Diploma (see below). These are Ghent, Agro Campus Ovest, Humboldt and Wageningen. The others (with the possible exception of Cordoba) continue to play roles in particular components of the teaching and learning programme for both EU and Third Country students.

IMRD up combines the strengths of high quality university partners with an effective division of labour between them. The joint approach **enables the students to choose an orientation-location combination that suits them**: environment-Rennes; sociology-Wageningen; institutional economics- Berlin. Berlin and Ghent offer more in terms of economics; Rennes and Wageningen offer sociology. Ghent appears most geared to developing countries. The structure, arrangements and quality of the courses offered at each site is consistent with local arrangements and the Erasmus Mundus students normally participate alongside other students on domestic programmes.

For the TROPED course in Copenhagen (UoC), there was a basis of previous development where in 1987 the Danish National Body of Health, NGOs and the Red Cross requested courses in tropical diseases. The first diploma course was established at the University, but needed assistance in delivering it. Links were established with Bergen and Stockholm, with contributions from London and Liverpool. The course ran in 1989, 1991, 1993, and 1995, and in 1998 there was a vision for a Master course in International Health, which was launched in 1999.

Blending the diverse range of academics into an identifiable 'team' requires both leadership and a set of behaviours that allow collaboration. For NOHA at UoG, the team was highly self-critical in a formative and proactive sense. There was an atmosphere of **openness and a constructively critical exchange of ideas**. The team demonstrated a commitment to 'change' via dialogue and by being open to new ideas from other settings.

The FUSION-EP course builds on **pre-existing network links between the partners**, and contributes also to the cooperative FUSENET FP7-funded project, started October 2008, which is an education network 36

¹¹ <http://www.cluster.org/> "12 leading universities of Science and Technology working together"



participants from 18 countries, of which 22 are Universities and 14 are Euratom Associations, with a focus from school to PhD education.

At Budapest courses like EUROAQUAE and normal Erasmus are vital to the institution and department in terms of internationalising staff. The funding that comes in from various EU sources **supports the development of Assistant Professors** and it is expected that they will have spent at least a year in an English-speaking country (or otherwise they are given a test).

On the EUROAQUAE course in Newcastle the Institution **rewards teaching**, and introduced a Readership promotion based on teaching criteria.

Pegasus¹² is a larger European network of 24 universities. Established 1998, and includes the EuMAS partner universities. Is a forum for discussion about harmonising the ways aerospace is taught across Europe. In the early years they developed standards by which members are measured and monitored, the idea being to create a quality standard. **There are clear criteria for being included or removed from the consortium.** Each year it runs a student conference where papers are presented, in collaboration with the US IAA. Involvement in Pegasus was a driver to apply for an ERM course as partners were aware it would enable the relatively easy harmonisation of programmes and teaching on the basis of the Pegasus experience.

The EuMAS course members participate in ECATA¹³ a consortium composed of seven leading Aerospace Institutes and the major Aerospace Manufacturers, is widely recognised as one of the leaders in these fields. With a tradition of innovation since its creation in 1988, ECATA has developed **a range of courses designed by professionals for professionals.** The annual "Aerospace Business Integration" course has been attended by engineers and scientists from more than 30 European companies, research centres and government agencies in Europe. The active ECATA Alumni network (ECALAS) promotes cooperation within the European Aerospace Community.

The WOP-P consortium is based in, and grew out of, the European Network of European Organizational Psychologists (ENOP¹⁴). This is an established network of full professors in the field of organizational psychology. ENOP provided the **reference model describing the contents, methods, and minimal standards** required in the training of WOP-P in Europe. One of the key features of the course is how comprehensively it is embedded in the professional networks for the discipline.

The EUROAQUAE academic team at Nice have **strong track record in collaborative research** and the same EUROAQUAE partners have a research group. Research relationships with partners extend to before the course was established, through a thematic network. Current activity includes the HYDRO-Europe network for collaborative research, with similar schemes under development in Asia and South America; an EU project on urban drainage resilience, and an agreement signed with UN-WHO to provide advice on flood management.

On the EMMME course in Lyon, the Rhone-Alps Grand Ecoles collaborate through the AGRA network in organising events for international students, including a welcome event in October. There is a **network of**

¹² <http://www.pegasus-europe.org/>

¹³ <http://www.ecata.org/>

¹⁴ <http://www.ucm.es/info/Psyap/enop/>



‘Jeunes Ambassadeurs’ who partner with local industry and then promote the INSA and industry links back in their own countries. INSA has a broader goal also of promoting ‘Europe’ in Asia.

And the academic quality culture can extend beyond the academic team to create a culture of togetherness across the course. This was evident at UoS where the AMASE **students praised the intimate academic relationship that they had with staff, the strong pastoral support and the feeling that they are treated as equals**. Similarly, at LUT, students highlighted the friendly environment where they felt they were treated as responsible adults. These views were also expressed by TROPED students at UoC where they benefited from extensive interaction with staff in Copenhagen. The students regard the **course administrator as being very supportive**. They feel that they are treated as equals by the course team and they note that the course team members are readily available for communication.

Lastly, there is little logic having partners with international quality academics if those academics do not teach the Erasmus Mundus students. On the EURO CULTURE course at Groningen there is a policy to ensure that senior staff who have busy international careers still teach the students. Senior administrators emphasised that ‘Professors must be available to students of all years’, and the tenure-track for promotion tries to balance both teaching and research activities, although research remains the major criterion.

4.2 Creating a Strong Course ‘Brand’

The challenge:

- How can the Course identity be created and marketed, so that excellent third country students work with excellent academics, in creating a definable educational brand that host institutions value strategically?

Courses need to understand how their **marketing and promotional activities were perceived by the ‘consumers’** – the prospective students. There should also be mechanisms in place to understand the **personal and the academic motivations for students to come to Europe** and to feed this information back into the marketing process. Students should be persuaded of the value that will be delivered to them, for example in terms of their **career value**.

Checklist of actions:

- Make Erasmus Mundus a brand that attracts exceptional students, who are attracted by the prospect of studying at high quality institutions, with high quality staff, on a course with relevant and robust content
- Ensure that the host institutions see Erasmus Mundus as an opportunity to build their own academic quality by bringing in the brightest and best qualified students
- Maximise the utility of the course website in creating a strong course brand
- Engage relevant professional bodies, and international associations in the constitution of a brand name for the course



The students we met during our programme of visits were exceptional people. We asked them 'Why come to Europe to study?' Responses included: to become an international citizen and researcher; experiencing courses that link theory to real-world applications using world-class facilities and infrastructure; being challenged by different academic cultures and learning to adapt intellectually and academically. There were particularly personal motives, such as getting away from the control of parents and 'becoming an individual'. However, an over-riding attraction that enables this to happen is the level of scholarship and students expressed that if it had been lower they would have considered other options.

The students have, to a large extent, been the most significant agents in making the Courses 'join-up'. They are clear in the reasons why they select Europe rather than North America for their studies and this goes well beyond the important levels of the scholarship. Students highlighted the great benefit of the **multicultural nature of the student population in the Master Courses** and the **collaborative environment** constructed by them. The students are very capable at self-organisation and have shared information relating to accommodation, travel and visas.

Examples of good practice

Put these characteristics together with an excellent Course environment and a rich academic experience can be created. For example on MESPOM at IIEE (Lund), the focus on the individual, which continues beyond admissions and throughout the delivery of the course, is extended beyond graduation to the course alumni. This was felt to be quite unusual for Higher Education. As a result, MESPOM students were said to be 'special', particularly for their commitment to the environment and also for their sense of 'community'.

For the AMASE Course, the combination of excellent students with excellent opportunities is evident. Erasmus Mundus masters students provide research inputs via the projects they carry out prior to the second-year thesis. So **theoretical and experimental work is closely linked with teaching and learning** and students are given the opportunity to analyse 'real-world' technical problems including: work related to the space shuttle programme; involvement with collaborative projects with the US Air Force; and projects on aero engines, wind turbines and the Swedish 'stealth' warship "Visby".

Students can see value also in the context of their career prospects. On the TROPED course we were told that students can experience considerable career benefit back in their home countries. 29 students from Ghana have been on the main TROPED course, including nurses and midwives, and their gender empowerment was considerable on return – **the Master qualification increased their 'bargaining power' back in their home organisations**. Therefore there was organisational change back home by re-plugging staff into their roles with a new authority, based on their new qualification. In addition, some were given higher impact jobs as the result and the extra evidence-based skills changed their power relationship.

On the MA-LLL course in Copenhagen DPU receives many international delegations which come to Denmark to study education policy, and the MA-LLL nationals from the same country are always invited to meet the delegation and present the MA-LLL-programme, not least to get a network and **improve access to the labour market in their home country**.

Therefore, **the combination of excellent research and teaching networks of excellence, the level of scholarship provided and the variety of academic and cultural experiences through the mobility, persuade the students that Erasmus Mundus remains cost beneficial in coping with the personal challenges in moving to Europe** and dealing with the significant bureaucratic overheads.



Many students remain in Europe to research for PhDs. This helps build research capacity for both students and departments and this was generally evident across the Departments we visited. For example, students on the AMASE course felt that there were several opportunities to continue into PhD research at UoS and many were considering this study option. They expressed the view that staff and current PhD students were keen to highlight research opportunities to AMASE students and support them in applications for these positions.

It is important therefore that **students clearly see that good career potential is a characteristic of the course**. Details of alumni career paths can be posted on the course Web site to encourage new students to apply as it showed that the course facilitates strong career prospects. On MESPOM each year a careers fair is held at CEU, where international companies from a range of sectors based in Hungary exhibit. AMASE at INPL monitors and communicates student destinations. The general expectation is that students will move to industry after graduation: 69% go to industry, 22% to PhD research, 3% are in transition with jobs, and 3% are unknown and 30 former students work in the European Patent Office in The Hague.

From the start, the EUROAQUAE **consortium was built around complementary strengths** underpinned by a common vision and made policy relevant by the EU Water Framework Directive. Part of this was the shared belief in the importance of aquatic ecology to hydraulic engineering. The goal is to promote and demonstrate integrated water management, linked to ecology, so that ecological impacts are identified and addressed in the decision-making process.

There is an Industrial Core Group for EUROAQUAE. The companies are interested in the overall two-year student experience and the internship as helping to mould potential employees. They provide a clear industrial validation of the brand. There is still considerable demand for qualified students in the water area. One employer said that the **good students from this course meant they did not “have to explain the same things each year to new employees”**. The group informs the curriculum content by validating that it meets industry needs.

A trusted Erasmus Mundus brand also can help to **overcome potential employment problems** for some students. For example the aerospace industry does have security concerns over employing students of certain nationalities, or even providing them with internships. However, the reputation of the EuMAS course has encouraged key parts of the aerospace industry to be sensitive to also allowing participation of students from countries such as Pakistan and India.

4.3 Securing and Maintaining Institutional Commitment

The challenge:

- How can the Course ensure that there is institutional commitment for sustainability, and that this commitment is clearly articulated across the consortium?

An Erasmus Mundus course is never likely to be a ‘profit centre’ for a University, indeed significant extra resources often have to be committed to the course. Therefore, there needs to be **clear recognition by all institutions that the course has strategic value**; that it fits into the **learning, teaching, and research strategies**; and that **senior staff** in the institutions articulate the importance of the course throughout the institution.



Checklist of actions:

- Ensure that the Course has wide recognition at institutional level and is fully embedded into university structures
- Ensure that the Course fits within an institutional strategy that values its international reach and educational objectives
- There is long-term buy-in for Erasmus Mundus by the people who matter in the participating host institutions
- Identify senior players in key academic positions, who can take on a role as champions for Erasmus Mundus

Examples of good practice

Institutional ‘buy-in’ is an important component both in creating and sustaining an Erasmus Mundus Course. In the creation stage, the Institution can provide authority, but it can also delegate, giving power and flexibility to the course team. For example, on the NOHA Course at Dublin, UCD staff highlighted that the university has shown much flexibility in relation to NOHA. Thus, the programme has been built to suit the consortium needs, rather than UCD regulations. The University has decided to accept “what was there” and not interfere with the programme in terms of time-table, etc.

In some academic cultures where there is strong autonomy at Faculty or Departmental level, there is not necessarily the need for high-level support to create a Course, but we were informed that situations can change. For example, support is seen as lacking where Universities take a harder line on financial sustainability of Master courses. However, the general picture is one of **strong institutional support at many levels**, such as for AMASE at INPL, where the government of Lorraine has produced a document about European collaboration and AMASE is highlighted in the document. For NOHA at UCD, there were two mobility dimensions to UCD’s internationalisation strategy during the period 2004-2008. One of them was to provide 15% of UCD’s undergraduate and post-graduate Irish students with an international experience (EU-US-Australia) to broaden their horizons. A second dimension was to increase the number of non-Irish UCD students to 20% of the university students. Erasmus Mundus fitted well with this aim. On MA-LLL in Tallinn there is a University internationalisation fund which is currently focused on building links and projects with Helsinki University, with a cooperation agreement signed in 2008, and there are bilateral cooperation agreements with universities worldwide .

Institutional support pervades successful courses. For MESPOM in Budapest CEU has a general **policy to increase the number of joint programmes** delivered by the University, so MESPOM contributes directly to that policy. So far, MESPOM, plus two programmes run by the Gender Studies Department, have the involvement of other prestigious European universities. These are now being registered in Hungary.

For CODE in Trento Erasmus Mundus is a key element of the University’s aim to internationalise. There is the full commitment of the Rector and Deans of the three faculties. The Rector lobbied the European Commission for continuation of Erasmus Mundus, and wrote to the Minister for Education in the new Italian government to promote the case for Erasmus Mundus.



For MERIT in Turin, the UoT has always been active in terms of internationalisation and in sending and receiving students from abroad. Courses were offered in English through an early collaboration with the University of Illinois. An early ICT course was identified as a major attractor for students and it was therefore decided to base the new MERIT degree around that field. At the same time the number of courses available in English expanded to other areas so that currently there are many courses in English across the curriculum. Nevertheless, the availability of courses in English is only one part of developing an excellent course, and it is the coherence of the overall academic offering that contributes to **making the University attractive to overseas students**.

For NOHA at Groningen, the commitment of the Rector was clear from the pre-financing provided to the programme when it started in Groningen and the delegation of competencies associated with NOHA, to its Director within the context of the NOHA Brussels-based legal structure. Lastly, at UPC, thirteen Masters are currently taught in English including seven Erasmus Mundus Master Courses. The University sees clear institutional benefits in creating international courses. It is part of UPC **becoming an international university by acquiring as many international students as possible**, since at present 95% of UPC students are from Spain/Cataluña.

EUROAQUAE generally provides impact for all member institutions. The benefits of excellent international students are feeding back into research, and **students are populating businesses and other organisations with positive impact for partner universities**. This then helps create an expanded network of contacts, and the course invites former students now in businesses back to deliver lectures etc

On the EUROAQUAE course in Newcastle, UK there are real benefits for the Institution and its internationalisation strategy. Erasmus Mundus is a tangible example of impact and hence acts as an exemplar, much deeper than Socrates or standard Erasmus, because the focus is on a degree programme. The university has been involved in new course applications as a result of identified impact and success of EUROAQUAE.

The University of Valencia has a particular mission to promote the harmonization and cooperation required for convergence in the **establishment of a Common European Higher Education Space**. It also has a high-level strategy for internationalization (in terms of students enrolled, teaching-staff exchange, visibility and cooperation). The WOP-P Master and Erasmus Mundus in general is seen within the organisation as a flagship for achieving these goals – “acting as a laboratory for Bologna”, “**dynamising professors**” and moving the institution toward a “more global context”. WOP-P was described in the following terms: a “prototype for international excellence”; a “breakthrough for Spain” (where there is no tradition of this kind of Master provision); “deeply embedded in the business of the university” and “experimental for the university as a whole”.

The FUSION-EP course in Ghent helps to **accelerate the provision of teaching in English**, which is not normally permitted within the Flemish Higher-Education system. Erasmus Mundus is an approved exception.

4.4 International Teaching and Research

The challenge:

- How can the Course secure commitment from the Institutions to help them deliver the highest quality of learning and teaching to third-country students?



Courses need not just to develop a **strong curriculum, taught by the best academics**, but to surround it with **world-class resources**, such as libraries and information technology services. The consortium should also provide opportunities at each site, for students to **study real-world applications** in related institutions, in locations such as Science Parks.

Checklist of actions:

- Welcome students as important international members bringing with them an additional contribution to the life of the institutions
- Provide an appropriate institutional level commitment in place to ensure that Erasmus Mundus students can expect high standards of support

Excellent students demand much from Erasmus Mundus courses, as noted on the NOHA course, where the universities recognise the NOHA students by the very high expectation they carry into absolutely every aspect of the course and the university services. On MESPOM at Lund, during the first year at CEU, students are given access to Lund University library's digital resources. This access is maintained for four years and some of the student representatives suggested that this access to the Lund library during the first year at CEU was a key factor in their decision to attend Lund in the second year. They also praised the opportunity to **access a fund to purchase books they might need for their work**, if these were not already in the library.

On the AMASE course at UoS there is **proximity to a Science Park with start-up companies emerging from University research activities**. The Science Park has won a national best practice award, specialising in biosciences, biochemistry, materials science. The Liebnitz Institute houses the Institute for New Materials. The Fraunhofer Institute for Non-Destructive Testing is on-site and it provides **leading research and consultancy experience for students**. The European School of Material was established in Germany and is linked to the ESM site in Nancy. The Fraunhofer Institute has a strong emphasis on income generation from industry through consultancy and presently has around 60% of income from industry, 40% from donations, government and EU project funding. Members of staff from the Institute contribute to lectures, carry out research with faculty, and host students for projects and thesis research. The Institute could be said 'to provide on-site industrial internships without the overhead costs of managing remote industrial relationships'.

For the academic staff who contribute to Erasmus Mundus courses there is a particular **dilemma relating to the balance of their time against research and teaching**. On EURO CULTURE in Groningen allowance is given for the preparation of an international master course. Staff are given extra time for preparation in English (once only). Staff promotion is mainly on the basis of research activity and outputs, and only the medical faculty has a career path related more to teaching (care for patients).

In member states such as Italy and Portugal the criteria for the promotion of higher education staff are set centrally at Ministry level. In the IMQP course in Ferrara The course team acknowledge that their commitment to international teaching does not contribute much toward criteria for promotion, which in Italy are defined at Ministry of Education level, and focus mainly on research activity and outputs. The consortium has discussed **the impact on the careers of junior scientists who may participate in such an intensive teaching programme**.



However, for IMQP in Tomar a new promotional grid in IPT (there has been a change of national regulation regarding academic promotion) will focus on three criteria of research; teaching and teaching quality; and, contribution to organisational activities, in essence administrative and management roles, but with a focus on local, regional and international role. In this context the **internationalisation strategy links directly to staff promotion and retention**.

Similarly, on the MA-LLL course in London IoE is aware that recognition of teaching excellence needs to be taken into consideration for promotion of staff, and that research excellence – though the primary element – is not the only criteria. Promotion paths for Senior Lecturer consider research, teaching, administration, consultancy and international developments. Since IoE is a predominantly postgraduate institution research and teaching are directly interlinked, and teaching is research focused. The Learning and Teaching Strategy of IoE can therefore **support staff to be flexible and innovative in their teaching**.

In Oslo (the DILL course) at the institutional level internationalisation is explicitly embedded in the organisational strategy. Furthermore, there is **explicit value placed both on teaching and research**.

4.5 Course Continuity and Leadership Succession

The challenge:

- How can academic leadership be secured to take forward the development?
- How can staff turnover be mitigated across the consortium so that the continuity of the course is maintained?

A successful course needs a strong consortium, with **strong intellectual leadership** and there needs to be a **clear benefit accruing to the senior academics**, who take the initiative to develop challenging Erasmus Mundus Courses. To facilitate their involvement, the institutions need to provide **formal support through recognition and reward** for the investment of time made by course leaders.

A clear strategy needs to be developed in a multi-partner consortium across countries and institutions, so that **staff loss or unavailability** does not lead to a reduction in the academic offering for the students. Furthermore, the individual leadership that characterises excellent courses needs also to have a plan for **sustainable leadership succession**.

Checklist of actions:

- Be sensitive to the opportunity costs experienced by those academics who commit significant time and energy to ensuring the success of the Course
- Offer institutional recognition for the 'teaching-intensive' contribution of those academics who commit significant time to Erasmus Mundus
- Maintain a robust approach to ensuring the long run sustainability of the consortium that recognises the need for leadership and key staff changes over time
- Develop strategies to accommodate short-term leadership changes as well as more fundamental issues for leadership succession



In an academic environment where research is the activity that generally is most prioritised and rewarded, active engagement with teaching a demanding international Master course can take time away from research.

Nevertheless, there are clear attractions in being part of high-profile courses. The mobility aspect, coupled with the possibility of linking with a wider network of Universities across the world, is seen as an **opportunity for professional and personal development of the staff**. Staff also reported that each year peer reviewed papers or similar publications should be obtained from students' work in collaboration with their tutors, which is **a clear incentive to work with excellent international students**.

Examples of good practice

However, it is essential that **institutional recognition is given for the time invested in Erasmus Mundus**. In Budapest this is now being considered in terms of staff progression, because to date CEU has quite strict research-focused criteria. However with the new types of activities (such as EM joint courses) the policy for staff progression is being revised and will be developed to compensate for the hard work which goes into this kind of project.

Where a system is clearly in place is in Dublin where UCD has a strong emphasis in quality in both teaching and research. So, although recently the University President has put strong emphasis on research performance, a new track for promotion through excellence in teaching has been created for all academic staff scales. This is important for NOHA staff as they put much emphasis on teaching and student support (and doing transnational academic coordination work), sometimes to the detriment of further research activities.

Erasmus Mundus courses have often emerged out of significant acts of personal leadership, involving teams of academics whose time is in demand and who are very mobile in career terms. Therefore, planning for leadership and team continuity must be a high priority. The NOHA team addressed this in detail. To ensure that sustainability, the universities involved have explored the following options:

- Maintenance of critical mass in the interdisciplinary teams;
- Development of a cross-university curriculum development teams;
- Development of joint research teams and participation of staff in different activities in the partner universities;
- Closer links with key people in the field and with former students. For example, some of them teach or participate in the Course;
- The development of the Academy and shorter courses as sustainable options;
- Focus on improving quality;
- Maintain a strong institutional anchorage;
- Explore future developments such as doctoral students;
- Decentralise coordination with more staff taking responsibilities for different parts of the administrative development.

The TROPED network **maintains commitment and quality of members through an initial formal accreditation process** and there are site visits to member institutions. In Deusto the Institute on Human Rights was created by UoD as a result of the activity associated with the Master and to give 'anchorage' to the programme. The Course team receive support from the team at the Institute.



Sustainability can, however, be threatened by national political circumstances, which can affect the levels of institutional and political support. There has been a low level of Danish student participation in TROPED because of the issues of course fees, especially since 2007 when Danish Universities must not take fees from students. We were informed that a Danish university had to withdraw from an Erasmus Mundus Course in Forestry so that Danish students could participate in it. It would not be possible to offer the course to Danish students if a Danish University was part of a consortium that charged fees.

One further act to ensure sustainability is through **the agreement of terms for partners both to leave and to join a consortium**. When NOHA considered expanding its network it embarked on a series of presentations to potential European partners, to stimulate applications for membership. This strategy was so successful and attracted so much interest to join NOHA, that a second step was necessary to filter candidates. This took the form of a questionnaire sent to interested institutions. Institutions were required to provide information about the existing political support in their University to join NOHA, staff background, specialism (the network was particularly looking for members which were strong in NGO participation in Eastern European countries at that stage), facilities, etc. From the responses to the questionnaire a selection was made.

4.6 Financial Sustainability

The challenge:

- How can the future sustainability of the course be achieved?

There is no guarantee that EC funding will be secured in the future, so courses need to develop **flexible financial plans** that aim to secure funding from diverse sources. In addition, financial sustainability should be enhanced during the period of EC funding by securing resources that **add more value to the learning and teaching experience of the students**, thus enhancing the reputation of the course and making it more marketable to future students.

Checklist of actions:

- Develop creative approaches to long-run finance, including considering the prospect of a cessation of Erasmus Mundus funding
- Use contacts such as Alumni, Local and Regional Organisations (Grants and Foundations), Business and Industry (Private Capital), to supplement the Erasmus Mundus finance that it receives
- Be specific about what actually is the sustainability goal after EU funding finishes.

For a university balancing the overall costs of an Erasmus Mundus Course just from course fees can be challenging. Courses are often supported with additional resources by a University because they fit with the broader aims of the institution and its philosophy, showing the institutional commitment on maintaining the Course. However, in some cases **the sustainability of the programme** without EU funding would be



ensured as the programme attracts both Erasmus Mundus grantee holders, and also other third country and EU students; the Erasmus Mundus Course can be built upon existing successful models for national Master courses. However, overall **Erasmus Mundus funding and support needs to remain attractive enough to justify engaging with the Scheme**. The focus on finance with these early pioneering courses has to date been more about obtaining additional resources (for example 'in-kind' resources for placements and internships), than about long-term sustainability, which will become a key focus as the course mature.

The FUSION-EP course in Ghent, along with other Erasmus Mundus courses at the University, is being **assessed by the University for its potential for long-term sustainability**. A University Working Group has been established, and there also is attention being given to ensuring effective succession planning for course leaders and coordinators.

Direct **financial sustainability is not so easily achievable across all disciplinary areas**, or equally in all member states. On the DILL course in Tallinn sustainability of the course beyond EU funding is problematical. Most Estonian industry finance for HE scholarships goes into hard sciences, particularly IT and biochemistry. In addition Estonian companies are just trying to survive in harsh economic times, and they have little surplus capital to donate to higher education.

4.7 Organisational Knowledge-Building and Internationalisation

The challenge:

- How can each of the organisations individually, and corporately, benefit from the impact of being involved in Erasmus Mundus?

Erasmus Mundus has a range of impacts for the stakeholders, ranging from students, academics to institutions and governments (for example where governments have become more sensitive to visa requests from excellent international students wanting to study in Europe). To benefit from impact the impact first has to be identified and understood, and then embedded back in personal, professional, and institutional practice.

Checklist of actions:

- Monitor, discuss and analyse how Erasmus Mundus is benefitting stakeholders
- Understand how the impact of Erasmus Mundus can lead to a sustainable impact for the stakeholders.

The feature of the Ghent situation is that IMRD (International Master in Rural Development) represents one of a cluster of around 11 international courses at postgraduate level under the banner of Erasmus Mundus and affiliated programmes (ATLANTIS for example). **The university operates a coordinated system** that spans Actions One, Two (institutional level capacity building in international consortia of up to 20 institutions) and Three (studies and promotion activities). The Ghent system brings basic administration together in a dedicated unit that supports admissions (500 applications per year), introduction, administrative and financial



management and support with a full time staff of two but more widely with the total support of the university authorities for what is regarded as an **institutional flagship operation**. The whole system is operated at scale. Even more impressively, the elements of the Erasmus Mundus programme are brought into mutually supportive interaction with each other on-the-ground in Ghent.

For the NOHA institutional knowledge involves **monitoring student destinations and long-term value**. A follow-up survey was carried out, with data from 154 students from the first five NOHA years (1994/95-1999/2000). This shows that 65% of the students who replied to the survey were working in the humanitarian aid field (in NGOs or International Organisations), 11% were working in research or HEIs, 10% in other areas (civil service, secondary school teachers, etc.) and 10% were looking for employment at the time of the survey.

In another context institutions can **find Erasmus Mundus helps build reputations**. The EuMAS course focuses on the Aerospace industry which has security concerns, and there can be problems with students of certain nationalities. However, the reputation of the EuMAS course has encouraged industry to be sensitive to also allowing participation of students from countries which in the past were regarded as potential security risks by the industry,

Where an institution participates in multiple courses there is benefit in using the range of experiences to **consolidate improved institutional practice**. On EuMAS in Madrid there are other ERM courses in the University, and the Central Office arranges meetings of coordinators to exchange information and discuss common issues.

For Tallinn University (DILL course) Erasmus Mundus programmes were very difficult for the University to win. Several consortia tried, and DILL is important at establishing a post-Soviet education boundary marker. The two partners in Estonia and Parma proposed the course, but felt they needed a strong coordinating site with a track-record in European teaching, and this was Oslo. **The experience has built up capacity within Tallinn to consider itself capable now of coordinating international master courses**. More specifically for the University, One piece of DILL student group-work was prepared for publication in a peer-group refereed journal. The high-quality international students have a positive impact on overall academic standards, and a DILL student in 2009 was marked as the top Master thesis in the University. The University student body is much more diverse, with 52 nationalities present in the 2009-2010 academic year.

The EURO CULTURE course in Krakow has helped **change both institutional and government practice**. Krakow started their participation in 2003. The current coordinator joined the team in 2005. The Department had been approached by colleagues who already had been collaborating. Initial intentions to participate were stalled because Poland did not recognise Euroculture as an official discipline for Master degrees, and Ministerial permission was required to permit Euroculture to be classed as a speciality within European Studies. Logistical challenges were therefore legal (inflexible subject definitions, and a requirement that a set percentage of a course must be taught in Poland for a degree certificate to be authorised), and organisational (inflexible organisations and faculties).

For Groningen and partners EURO CULTURE helps **extend international 'reach'**. Maintaining trust and good working relationships is important across the large consortium. The consortium meets three times a year, and also at the Integrated Programme. The three formal meetings have two-day agendas where there is a lot of discussion about practice and quality. Academics have **benefitted from Action 3 funds to be mobile across institutions**. Non-EU institutions which are part of the wider EURO CULTURE network sent representatives to the Management Board twice a year, and the University of Osaka has established its European Office in Groningen and Gottingen has an international office in Pune (India).

Erasmus Mundus can even help change a community. On the IMQP course in Tomar students work extensively at the Museum and Department site in the village of Macao. This is a small rural community where Erasmus Mundus students have transformed the community from an insular rural community to one which is receptive and welcoming to international students. Property has been renovated to provide accommodation, students spend money in the local economy and there are more shops and products available (including international newspapers), and the community



has now developed its own marketing brand for cultural goods. Museum employees include former Erasmus Mundus graduates and the Town Mayor has been central also in legitimating internationalisation within the community.

Key characteristics of this process include locally embedded consumption – students spend locally, and do not present a threat to the local property market since they will not purchase property and drive up prices; local governance which is a partnership between local politicians and university staff; academics who are embedded into the local culture by running the museum; an international focus being developed for local businesses. The local café is now a key focal point for students who have helped develop a Web site for the café and the café owner is providing extra pastoral support for the students in return and the café has become an important social and learning base for students.



5 Joined-up Practice and Integration (JUPI)

Joining up processes across Europe, Institutions and Disciplines, is central to what makes Erasmus Mundus a unique educational programme. This Component assesses the extent to which Course Consortia have a fully integrated approach in areas of: marketing their course and recruiting students; in using integrated information to transfer information between partners; in using this information to build intelligence about the course and in communicating it to students; and in agreeing a transparent division of labour between partners through clearly defined procedures and processes.

There also needs to be a transparent division of finance, linked to the responsibilities of the partners, and the scholarships need to be attractive enough to recruit the best students from Third Countries. The teaching activities need to demonstrate consistency and clarity in areas of pedagogy, workload planning, student working practices, teaching practice and support.

Lastly, all these activities are enabled by an excellent consortium that has previous experience of working together and that has the capacity and practice to maintain and further develop the consortium.

5.1 Selecting Students

The challenge:

- How can the student selection process be undertaken in a way that involves all the consortium members, but also operates efficiently and effectively?
- Do the qualifications claimed by the student confirm that they have the right background education to match them to the Course and that their skill-set will prepare them well for the academic work they will undertake?

Courses need to **develop procedures and practices that operate across partners**, linking together a multi-institutional consortium with potential students, who may be in Third Country locations with low-speed or limited access to the Internet. The **application process** must be **easy for students to complete**, and the **criteria by which they will be evaluated** should be clearly stated. The application process also should inform students about **the academic offerings they will receive across the consortium**.



Checklist of actions:

- Involve all consortium members in the student selection process
- Take into account the different circumstances the students will encounter from host to host
- Make the selection process transparent so that students can quickly match themselves to a Course
- Use international research networks to develop innovative ways of verifying the qualifications of students
- Build institutional procedures for the accreditation for foreign education
- Focus strongly on competences and practical experience as a means of adding contextual richness to the statement of formal qualifications

In an earlier section the need to communicate clear application and selection criteria to students was highlighted. The emphasis in this section is on the coherence with which the consortium will evaluate the applications and then ensure that the best students are recruited. It is possible, for example, to use external student recruitment agencies to manage the process, but there are associated risks in not being able to ensure that the process is specifically focused on the Erasmus Mundus course.

Examples of good practice

IMRD (International Master in Rural Development) processes over 500 applications a year. They are filtered down to 200 on eligibility and further to 20 scholarship winners. The selection process is done in February with **full partner involvement under a set of commonly agreed rules**. A strong element in the selection process of EU-sponsored students is that first a ranking of students is made by the expected probability of successful completion of the programme. The scholarships are then awarded – within the set determined by the sponsor's criteria – according to this ranking. Selected by this means, the sponsored students scored better than the other students.

On the AMASE course, particular partners use the assistance of colleagues in Third Countries. The partners can provide coordination assistance, or their own national networks, which add value in the selection of students. For example, at UoS there is a process of **obtaining knowledge about the quality of universities in Third Countries** through the German Humboldt Foundation. This is a global network of exceptional **scientists who can be formally appointed as their own country coordinators** and who can promote the Course and advise on the selection of candidates. There is a yearly Humboldt conference in Berlin. This helps to reinforce the strong network of trust.

The number of applications to a Course can be high, with an associated overhead in filtering them. On MERIT the applications totalled more than 700 in the 2007 academic year. This forced the consortium to put into practice concrete measures to be able to **select only the candidates having competences well-suited to the course**. This system consists of the Programme Coordinator reviewing all the CVs and eliminating the ones that do not satisfy the minimum prerequisites. Among them there is the so called "affinity with the study program", which is understood as whether the student has an electrical engineering background or not. This



filter served to leave in the pool 120 students in the last selection exercise, a more reasonable number for a thorough evaluation.

After an initial filtering by the Programme Coordinator, the remaining candidates are measured by a minimum of two evaluations from each consortium partner. The selection criteria at this stage were clear, although again there were some subjective indicators such as the quality of the home institution, which is not easy to measure for some countries, unless there is a formal structure such as the one noted above for AMASE in UoS.

A secure **Intranet can allow all partners to contribute to the evaluation in a coherent way**, keeping all information in a single system that is constantly updated. For MERIT this also extends to a secure facility that allows students to track the progress of their application. There is a Web tool for the applications of students, and it is used for monitoring their status: this tool allows **consortium members and potential students to keep track of the status of each application** at any time.

Exit interviews can be undertaken with students who have decided to leave the course, or who are leaving because of academic failure etc.

In the context of international concerns about faked qualifications, how can a Course both convince University authorities that the candidate details are legitimate and robust, while not putting in place a process that deters excellent candidates from applying? Beyond the formal administrative processes what other mechanisms can be used to help validate student applications and qualifications?

Excellent courses aim to balance the burden of proof required from students with the need to ensure that the **Institutions are satisfied that the qualifications are legitimate**. However, in some cases students experience significant administrative requirements and the process of legitimating qualification is becoming ever more challenging, even when assessing the authenticity of a claimed degree from a European or a North American University¹⁵.

Therefore it is not surprising that Universities fear the publicised growth of “*fake visas and entry qualifications, dubious admissions practices, bogus institutions, plagiarism, dishonest grading and counterfeit qualifications*”¹⁶. For example, some students were concerned that they were required to **obtain legal attestation about their qualifications** from Institutions in Pakistan.

Good practice exists where the Courses are using **formal processes to evaluate accreditation** of both the qualifications and also to extent the consideration into the accreditation or prior learning. Such considerations allow students the possibility of not taking courses where they clearly have prior competences, such as for TROPED using CBBU, a formal process of accreditation for foreign education. They ask potential students to request their University to send a transcript and this is processed centrally by the Berlin office for this Erasmus Mundus programme.

¹⁵ BBC. (2003). *Bogus degree sites shut down*. (March 7) BBC, [cited March 8 2003]. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/education/2829237.stm>, BBC. (2004). *Fake universities thrive on the web*. (January 5) BBC, [cited January 6 2004]. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/education/3369567.stm, SINGEL, R. (2004). *No Third Degree for Diploma Mills*. (March 18) Wired.com, [cited March 20 2004]. <http://www.wired.com/news/politics/0,1283,62689,00.html>

¹⁶ TYSOME, T. (2005). *Fraud Booms Worldwide*. (August 5) Times Higher, [cited July 5 2008]. <http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/story.asp?storycode=197701>



And for AMASE in Saarbrücken there is the use of an **extended international network to help verify the suitability of applicants**. All partners are involved in selecting candidates. There is a high application rate, so the challenge is to identify the best. There is a process of obtaining knowledge about the quality of universities in third countries through the German Humboldt Foundation. This is a global network of exceptional scientists who can be formally appointed as their own country coordinators and who can promote the course and advise on the selection of candidates. There is a yearly Humboldt conference in Berlin. This helps to **reinforce the strong network of trusted expertise**.

A clear admissions policy will therefore define the necessary qualifications and competences, which for NOHA is a **joint admission policy, decided by the Board of Directors**. This takes into consideration first cycle learning outcomes and competences and the emergence of a European Higher Education space. In this context the access requirements agreed by the Consortium are:

- A good level first cycle degree (bachelor degree, three or four years) in a discipline of relevance to humanitarian action;
- A recognised qualification in the language(s) of instruction of the university(s). Knowledge of languages of the place of study is an asset;
- Practical experience in the area of humanitarian action in governmental, inter-governmental, and/ or nongovernmental organisations and institutions is valued.

Going beyond the formal administrative processes the EMMME consortium uses a **network of experts in different countries**. This is an extended Network of Expertise that provides value in validating and recommending students. For example they have colleagues in Chinese universities who first check applications. They rank first applicants who are not from their home cities (there are local quotas, and it is more challenging to be admitted to another university), and if students have been given a full scholarship (given on merit) that is another positive indication.

They also **use discretion to seek wider evidence**. For example, an application from a student in Ethiopia would have been rejected on the grounds solely of institutional reputation for the first degree. This student ended up as the best student in the first year. The consortium contacted the student's home university and made their own investigations about curriculum quality. INSA Lyon promotes the creation of dialogues with partner universities, and there is a strong focus on alumni (24,000 in total) albeit primarily on securing finance from them.

EMMME also use a pragmatic approach to assessing the written applications, avoiding complex criteria which may not be justified by the detail provided on application forms. They use a simple scoring system (0-5) and give points for the quality of transcripts, and they also weight by universities that are known to the consortium (0 – no knowledge, 2 – known and good, 4 – world class), and also they discuss with experts in their wider network. Applications are evaluated using intensive consortium knowledge which is built incrementally through the network of excellence.

On the EuMAS course in Munich the department can use a **centralised quality ranking of international universities**. The Bavarian Ministry of Education has a formal ranking of international universities which is used for the primary selection of students. However, there is also an associated risk that such a centralised register could be too general to effectively discriminate for specialised academic disciplines.



5.2 Consortium Information System

The challenge:

- How can we design and implement a course-wide information system that manages student information effectively and securely and that makes teaching and learning information accessible to all students regardless of their location?

developed that **integrates all the vital information related to students**, their assessment records, and also provides an **integrated communication** mechanism between staff and students.

Checklist of actions:

- Use a secure Intranet facility with a robust content management system for the structuring and storing of student information
- Enter and store student information (from personal details to Course selection, assessment and examination marks) efficiently and securely
- Be transparent with students about the information that is stored on the system, with relevant assurances under freedom of information rules, that they can view and validate personal information
- Make available a teaching Intranet so that students can access teaching materials in an integrated manner, regardless of their geographical location

Examples of good practice

Consistent and coherent communication is central to the efficient functioning of a consortium distributed across several countries. The MESPOM Course uses a single Web site where there is a login area, which can only be accessed by MESPOM community members, and there is a MESPOM agreement that students will check their MESPOM intranet e-mail account.

The transfer of students from one institution to the next requires the **efficient and secure transfer of student information between partners**. This needs to be undertaken in a way that respects the privacy and data protection regulations at both locations.

Google documents¹⁷ have been used within FUSION-EP to prepare a fully integrated student record that allows student progress to be monitored. Such developments need to observe data protection legislation, and also need to provide inter-visibility. For example, **monitoring the dates for student work submission needs also to monitor the timely provision of marks and comments from staff**.

There is an **Intranet which provides a private course space** on the EUROQAUE website. Staff and students can log in to find details of all courses and all course materials in PDF format. Staff can upload and

¹⁷ <http://www.google.com/ig>



edit content using the content management system. There is a library section with digital books on subjects like maths, physics etc. There is a very large **digital library** which also includes journals, and software is available for download. For example industry contacts provide modelling software (estimated to be worth about €200,000 if the licences had to be purchased). **Students have their own space where they can upload their own material.** There is an alumni section which is partly private and partly public, including student blogs along with movies hosted on You Tube.

The main system used across the WOP-P course is an intranet platform supported by the University of Valencia: this embodies the 'aula virtual' system (a university-wide project still undergoing development). The platform contains:

- An area for general coordination issues: Dedicated to the coordinators of all the universities of the consortium and to technical staff;
- An area for coordination issues in teaching: Dedicated to coordinators and technical staff;
- Teaching Staff Restricted Area: Created for sharing information and material between all the teaching staff (across the whole consortium). Dedicated to coordinators, teaching staff from all 5 Universities and technical staff;
- Student Restricted Area: Created for sharing information between students (whole consortium) and alumni. Dedicated to coordinators, students and alumni from the 5 Universities, and technical staff;
- An area supporting the Joint Intensive Learning Unit (Winter School). In this case the aula virtual works as a support platform to share information about the students, to upload material for them and have access to the assignments delivered by them. Dedicated to coordinators, teaching staff of the Winter School and students from the five Universities.

5.3 Policy for Course Fees

The challenge:

- How can the finance from student fees be allocated across the consortium so that the money is invested according to academic objectives? How can the fee policy accommodate different national and institutional policies across the consortium?

Checklist of actions:

- Set Course fees through a formal consortium policy
- Allocate Course fees per student across the institution so that academic objectives are met
- Agree a formal pan-institutional policy regarding the distribution of Course fees to cover management overheads and academic activities

Formalising agreements about the flow of money is a key challenge for Courses. At one level there will be a desire to ensure that there is financial equity across the consortium. There is a powerful logic in taking this approach, if it is accepted that the consortium is made up of partners of equal quality (subject to the partners continuing to justify their role based on their performance), then an equal distribution of finance could be a justified decision, even if the equal distribution is adjusted for relative costs. In such a case there could be an



expectation that each partner site will host the same number of students. However, other factors influence the flow of finance, such as the relatively higher Course fees charged by UK universities.

On another level, student choice could also be a powerful influence. In meetings with students they frequently noted that their choice of location was often constrained by quotas equally distributed between partners, rather than the finance flowing to partners depending on student choice. The lesson from any of these scenarios is: that **there is no substitute for a clear articulation and communication of the financial principles that underpin the course and the consortium.**

Examples of good practice

For the CODE Course the **Memorandum of Understanding sets out clear principles and clear details for Course financing.** For example, while the scholarship allocation may be equally distributed across a consortium, the resulting flow of resource among the consortium can be decided on the basis of a budget attached to each task, and each university receives budget on basis of each task performed. At IIEE (MESPO) there is a decision that the allocation of scholarships, and charging of course fees, will be dealt with more 'explicitly' in future, for instance by holding an initial meeting with students to ensure that they have a good understanding of how their fees are delivering academic value to them.

A contentious area relates to the setting of Course fees, with **a range of national and institutional policies regarding Course fees** presenting challenges to the EC requirement that course fees are equal. This ranges from the no-fees policy of Denmark, to the full-cost-plus fees in the UK. There is a State Law in Bavaria that tuition money must be used for the improvement of study and the academic programme it relates to. There are unexpected tensions between the Erasmus Mundus Course and the political level regarding course fees in higher education, because there is not a tradition in Denmark of students paying for higher education. The MERIT Course at Turin is affected by the fact that in Italy scholarships are subject to taxation at a rate of 20%. This problem was resolved when the first students arrived three years ago, by arranging to have the funds disbursed from the co-ordinating institution in Barcelona.

At the institutional level some universities deliberately set fees low and for UoD (NOHA) the Course makes a loss for the University. However, NOHA is supported because it fits with the broader aims of the Institution and its philosophy, showing the institutional commitment on maintaining the course. The strategy, in general, has been to try to keep fees low compared to other programmes of the University.

The EMGS (European Master in Global Studies) consortium charges a **common tuition fee of €5,100 a year to non-EU students and €3,600 for EU-nationals.** The fees cover students' participation in all teaching and learning activities as well as an overhead charge for administrative support and organisation. In the case of the University of Leipzig, for current year there are 8 Category A scholarships (these include a single travel allowance of €8,000 and living allowance of € 1,000 per month) and two Category B scholarships (these comprise a single travel allowance of € 3,000 and living costs of €500 per month). A further 2 Category A grants and 6 Category B grants covering tuition fees are dedicated to nationals from the Western Balkans and Turkey.

There are also a number of "**fee waivers**" applied as part of the Erasmus Mundus package. Currently some 30 of these at €2,300 per year is available. They are open to all students who apply for EMGS and wish to study at the University of Leipzig, Roskilde University, the University of Vienna or the University of Wroclaw. Study at the LSE is excluded from these waivers. Students not receiving an Erasmus Mundus scholarship



and studying at the universities of Leipzig, Roskilde, Vienna and Wroclaw can also apply for up to one year from an Erasmus grant worth approximately €150 a month. The consortium does attract a large number (unspecified) of students willing to pay the full tuition fee of €5,100/year.

On the MERIT Course the consortium agreed a **common tuition fee policy** of €2500 for EU students and €5000 for third country ones, per each year of the Master. The UCL team found this common tuition fee policy issue useful to solve some problems created by the delay experienced by some students on ending the second year of studies in another institution: this delay requires extra-fees to be paid internally at UCL. The payment system at consortium-level covers these expenses without intervention of students.

5.4 Division of Labour across the Consortium

The challenge:

- How can all members of the consortium reach acceptance on the division of labour in a way that meets all the academic objectives?

Checklist of actions:

- Agree and document the process by which tasks within the division of labour are allocated and can be reviewed
- Document the division of labour between institutions, in the context of clear effectiveness and efficiency criteria

Examples of good practice

For the NOHA consortium, detailed job descriptions of each position were developed. The profiles are transparent and explained to the team members. The NOHA Director, Programme Coordinator and Administrator meet regularly to discuss the most important academic and non-academic issues and to establish priorities and agree tasks. There are also ad-hoc meetings in order to discuss new issues that appear during the week. The NOHA Director and Programme Coordinator organise meetings with module coordinators and faculties, to discuss teaching and research objectives and challenges that come out of students' evaluations of the programme and each module.

For MESPOM at a very early stage, the Consortium agreed on the responsibilities of each institution – based on both experience and practicalities (e.g. it was agreed that CEU would take responsibility for the payment of scholarships because of its particular level of experience in administering such grants). The approach was thus not to allocate the workload so that each of the four partners was responsible for a quarter of the burden, rather to allocate the workload in relation to strengths and practical factors – this was felt to be the right approach in order to facilitate effective teaching and learning across the course. A Memorandum of Understanding was drafted at an early stage during the development of the course proposal, in order to formalise this agreement. This 'codification' of responsibilities was felt to be very important in order to successfully deliver the course.



On EURO CULTURE the consortium maintains cohesion and trust through the use of sources such as Erasmus Mundus Action 3 funds. Members of staff are frequently mobile across partner sites. Students evaluate the performance of their mobility universities and staff, and the partners also evaluate each other. This is discussed in management meetings, and changes are planned and implemented as a result of discussions. The focus is on raising quality levels across the course rather than judging individual members of staff (the latter is usually an institutional responsibility anyway).

5.5 A Consortium-Wide Quality Assessment Process

The challenge:

- How should staff internally review their course and how can structured student feedback on the Course be obtained in a way that clearly communicates the outcomes to those who contributed to the consultation process?

Checklist of actions:

- Use information provided by each partner institution to regularly review the quality of the Course content and the teaching of the Course
- Use the information to ensure that the Course modules are normally delivered by the best available teachers across the consortium
- Obtain feedback from students at all partner sites and review, harmonise and act upon the outcomes at the consortium level

Internal review is different from external review. Whereas external review provides an independent benchmark of the Course against national and international standards, internal review is more focused on **doing things better, doing them more efficiently, and delivering value to the main beneficiaries, the students.**

Examples of good practice

For the TROPED course there is a General Assembly which reviews all learning objectives and assessment methods.

For NOHA the process of improving overall quality also included networking activities, regarded as helping the 'organic growth' of the NOHA learning and teaching infrastructure. The **physical networking of partner institutions and the building of relationships between representatives of the institutions** are considered central to the process. The growing teaching and research linkages are serving to enhance partner interdependence. It is the strength of professional and interpersonal relationships and the atmosphere of mutual trust, that for AMASE, achieves 'jointness' through a delicate balance between individual, departmental and consortium initiative, as well as the formal processes of harmonising practices **within a consortium agreement that is ratified and supported at a University level.**



On EUROAQUAE External QA Assessors are appointed for EUROAQUAE. There are two Assessors, one from academia and one from industry. They are external and independent, and are 'critically constructive friends' to the course. They both were linked to consortium members through a SOCRATES thematic network on water and environment. At the outset the consortium wanted a QA component, not just for academic reasons, but also because of the needs to bridge the understandings of industry (consumers of the course products) and academic (producers of the products). This formed part of the initial application to run the course submitted by Nice University. They have formal ToR which are documented and agreed by the Management Board. They have developed a Handbook of QA for consortium partners to follow which has been approved by the Management Board. QA assessors feel this provides a 'solid basis' for setting out and prescribing their role.

On WOP-P the system of quality assessment is seen as a shared one across all the partner institutions. This covers quantitative and qualitative assessment, as well as internal and 'external' (but within the institution) evaluation. Student feedback is sought through this process with a specific short questionnaire used for third-country students, including questions related to lodging assistance and linguistic policy. A quality report with actions for improvement is produced for each year.

Quality assurance across IMRD (International Master in Rural Development) is maintained within the respective national systems of the participating institutions. However there also exists a **supplementary QA process**. This is provided by the European Accreditation Agency for the Life Sciences (EEALS). This has been evolved as an alternative that can be applied where the national QA standards are regarded as insufficiently flexible.

5.6 Managing the Consortium

The challenge:

- How can we implement performance expectation and performance management across the consortium, in a way that respects the authority of each Institution and each Department?

Checklist of actions:

- Ensure that individuals in the consortium have significant prior experience of working together, through formal collaborative structures, joint research and teaching
- Define criteria for the expected performance levels of members and clearly state expectations for potential new partners
- Agree a management hierarchy and a level of in-built trust that allows programme coordinators to have widely delegated operational responsibility
- Develop and implement a formal consortium agreement that records the agreed procedures and practices in the management of the Course
- Agree protocols for communication and conflict resolution as devices to build and sustain trust



Managing an Erasmus Mundus consortium can be challenging, with a high overhead in terms of time and effort. UPC Barcelona (MERIT) noted that consortium-level decision-making processes can be slow, largely because the Programme Coordinator has little executive authority over partner sites and decisions can require formal ratification by partners. The administrative burden of such a Course, including the reporting overhead to the European Commission, was estimated to be an additional 80-100% over a conventional Master Course.

Furthermore, the formal decision-making processes at institutional level can work at a slower rate than the speed at which the Course can be established and **the consortium works pragmatically to minimise the impact of slow institutional decision-making processes**. MERIT was one of the pioneer courses for Erasmus Mundus. In the first year, 2004, discussions were still ongoing related to consortium-level decision making and cooperative aspects. More recently, the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between the four institutions. This not only sets out the basic governance, but also reflects the learning acquired in the last few years. The MoU had been signed by Rectors in 2004 and the double degree was ratified by the four institutions in November 2007 and signed in full March 2008.

Examples of good practice

For MERIT two consortium meetings are organised per year (one more than originally foreseen), for the student selection and to mark the start of the academic year. The **decision-making at consortium level is mainly organised around regular meetings**. The meetings also need to overcome the situation where the people around the table have limited formal decision-making capacity on behalf of the University.

For MESPOM, at a very early stage, the Consortium agreed on the responsibilities of each institution, based on both experience and practicalities. It was agreed that CEU would take responsibility for the payment of scholarships, due to its particular level of experience in administering such grants. The approach was thus not to allocate the workload so that each of the four partners was responsible for a quarter of the burden, but to **allocate the workload in relation to strengths and practical factors**. This was felt to be the right approach in order to facilitate effective teaching and learning across the Course. **A MoU was drafted at an early stage during the development of the course proposal**, in order to formalise this agreement. This 'codification' of responsibilities was felt to be very important in order to successfully deliver the Course.

NOHA Directors hold **Business Meetings to reflect and take decisions on all aspects of the Network**. They are assisted by other staff members of each participating institution, in particular the university NOHA links or NOHA Coordinators. These seven people, one at each university, have a half time employment by the programme. There is one programme co-ordinator per participating university. He/she assists the NOHA Director and carries out day-to-day administrative and technical tasks for the students. He/she liaises with other links, the Project Manager, students at other universities of the network and with external partners (NGOs, IGOs, government institutions/agencies, etc).

For the CODE Course there is a Course co-ordinator at each partner university, with TU providing (crucially) the overall co-ordination. **The consortium meets twice a year and maintains regular contact in order to take actions**, such as transferring student information, ensuring parity in academic standards and updating Course content.

Two main devices are used to achieve organization and coordination for the consortium as a whole. These are the **coordinating committee meetings and the annual workshops**. Each year the Coordinating Committee (coordinator of the programme, vice-coordinator, and national coordinators) holds three meetings.



Topics for these include: reviewing the different topics of the Master; compliance with and changes in agreements and actions. At the annual workshops the partner institutions come together to share ideas and establish mechanisms for better integration, and the workshops take place in rotation across the different sites.

A broad objective of general up-skilling in the WOP-P field itself is combined with active exploration of ways to achieve better integration and standardization among partner institutions work area by work area. (or example, for personnel psychology partners have developed a shared handbook of training activities, competencies to be developed, and criteria to be used in their courses. There is **continuous review of the mechanics of the standardisation and coordination process**, with documents describing the roles of home and host tutors, responses to issues for the mobility period, and questions about different phases in the training process. The overall aim of the workshop is to offer the opportunity for a rolling review.

Overall such coordination activities can contribute to ensuring that **all members of the consortium senior team understand that failure of one partner will reflect adversely on all partners**, and the consortium therefore develops robust practices for monitoring performance across sites.

5.7 Policy for Awarding the Masters Degree

The challenge:

- How can the national and institutional policies regarding Master degrees be resolved so that students are awarded an identifiable Erasmus Mundus Master degree?

Checklist of actions:

- Set out clearly, in the consortium agreement, the ways in which the Erasmus Mundus Master Degree will be awarded
- Provide full transcripts of student achievement in a format that can be accepted by institutions back in their home countries

Examples of good practice

In the NOHA consortium, some previous partners left the programme due, amongst other factors, to their impossibility to provide joint degrees. There are therefore **challenges to be overcome regarding national legislation about degrees and in institutional policies**. In 2008 the NOHA universities finalised **an agreement which will meet all the requirements of the different national legislations and agreed the format of the joint degree diploma and joint diploma supplement**. Three out of the seven countries, where the NOHA universities are located, have now issued legislation on joint degrees. Both the German and the Irish leave this to the universities (University College Dublin degrees are joint at the national level). Sweden and the Netherlands do not have, for the time being, legislation that allows joint degrees. The consortium decided to prepare both the Agreement and the format that allows flexibility for those that have already joined and everything is ready for the other two institutions to join in as soon as possible.



MERIT used a **double degree agreement framework**. This is a pragmatic response to the challenges and timescales involved in agreeing single degree protocols across institutions. Even this was challenging, because double degrees are not well integrated into university procedures. MERIT is designed as a double-degree scheme, in such a way that **two different national degrees are awarded independently by the two institutions** by which the student was registered. At present there is not specific coordination between the different national examining boards and this could lead to having two diplomas with different final marks for the same student, but this is indicative again of the significant challenges faced by consortia when building an Erasmus Mundus Course.

Some institutions cannot award degrees themselves, but can achieve this through partnerships with other universities. TROPED KIT (The Royal Tropical Institute) does not deliver degrees and it is through the partnership link with VRI (Free University of Amsterdam) that the Masters is awarded.

Students have requested that the Master Degree Certificate be available with a **full transcript of courses, grades, and achievement** in a **global English translation**, even if the Certificate and transcript are provided in the national language of the awarding institution.

There are, however, remaining challenges in harmonising the award of degrees across European higher-education institutions. In Italy universities will not issue a degree certificate unless a certain proportion of teaching takes place in Italy. Some European employers do not recognise a joint degree, but will prefer double degrees.

The EMMME course applied to the French Accreditation Agency for permission to award a joint diploma, but was advised to focus on a double diploma. The argument was that in France employers value first the Engineer label, rather than a label of double degree. This highlights the difficult balance in achieving the objectives of Bologna.

EUROAQUAE issues a **Joint Degree** since May 2006 on behalf of all institutions. All students are registered in all five partner locations. A template has been agreed for the final document, but there have been some problems with **French law that mandates all degree certificates only to be in French**. Ministry insists that rules are complied with.

In WOP-P **students are awarded a double degree combining their 'home' and 'host' institutions**. Since the certification is in compliance with respective national laws regulating the profession, the qualification brings with it the right to practice the profession of psychologist in the field of WOP Psychology in the relevant countries. The WOP-P Master also provides a **recognised track for access to doctoral studies** in psychology and related disciplines.

Students of the European Master in Global Studies (EMGS) are **awarded different certificates depending on their mobility track**. This may be a joint degree or a double degree. In both cases the degree is accompanied by a diploma supplement. This contains further detail about the universities involved, the qualifications gained by the student and the mobility track. Each student also receives a transcript listing all the courses the student has attended and the grades received. Once again in this respect, variety is the norm with each university finding the requirements for Erasmus Mundus from within its domestic degree award arrangements.



Annex: Courses Visited 2008-2010

2008 Courses

CODE - Joint European Master in Comparative Local Development

<http://www.unitn.it/mastercode>

Coordinator - Trento University, Italy (TU)

Partners - Corvinus University of Budapest, Hungary; University of Regensburg, Germany

MERIT - European Master of Research on Information and Communication Technologies

<http://www.meritmaster.org>

Coordinator - Univ. Politecnica de Catalunya, Spain (UPC)

Partners - Technical University of Turin, Italy (UoT); Catholic University of Louvain, Belgium (UCL)

NOHA - European Master's Degree in International Humanitarian Aid

<http://www.nohanet.org>

Coordinator - Univ. de Deusto, Spain (UoD)

Partners - University of Groningen, Netherlands (UoG); University College Dublin, Ireland (UCD)

MESPOM - Master of Environmental Sciences, Policy and Management

<http://mespom.eu>

Coordinator - International Institute for Industrial Environmental Economics, Lund, Sweden (IIEE)

Partners - Central European University, Hungary (CEU); University of Manchester, UK (UoM)

AMASE - Masters Programme in Advanced Materials Science & Engineering

<http://www.amase-master.net>

Coordinator - Univ. Saarlander, Germany (UoS)

Partners - Institut National Polytechnique de Lorraine (INPL) Nancy, France; Luleå University of Technology, Sweden (LUT)

TROPED - Science Programme in International Health

<http://erasmusmundus.troped.org>

Coordinator - Univ. Inst of Tropical Medicine, Berlin, Germany

Partners - University of Copenhagen, Denmark (UoC); Royal Tropical Institute (KIT), Vrije University Amsterdam (VRI), Netherlands



2009 Courses

EMMME - European Master of Mechanical Engineering

<http://www.emmme.com>

Coordinator - I.N.S.A de Lyon : Institut National des Sciences Appliquées de Lyon.

Partners - Escola Tècnica Superior d'Enginyeria Industrial de Barcelona (Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya); Trinity College Dublin

EITEI - Degree in Economics of International trade and European Integration

<http://webhost.ua.ac.be/eitei>

Coordinator - University of Antwerp, Belgium.

Partners - Free University of Brussels, Belgium; Staffordshire University, United Kingdom; University of Cantabria, Spain; University of Bari, Italy; University of Science and Technology of Lille, France; Prague University of Economics, Czech Republic

EUROAQUAE - Master of Science in Hydro-Informatics & Water Management

<http://www.euroaquae.org>

Coordinator - University of Nice Sophia Antipolis, France.

Partners - Brandenburg Technical University Cottbus, Germany; University of Newcastle upon Tyne, United Kingdom; Budapest University of Technology & Economics, Hungary; Technical University of Catalonia, Spain

EuMAS - Aeronautics and Space Technology

<http://www.aerospacemasters.org>

Coordinator - University of Pisa, Italy.

Partners - Technical University of Munich, Germany; Technical University of Madrid, Spain; National Higher Education Institute for Aerospace (ENSAE-Supaero), France; Cranfield University, United Kingdom

FUSION-EP - European Master in Nuclear Fusion Science and Engineering Physics

<http://www.em-master-fusion.org>

Coordinator - Ghent University, Belgium.

Partners - Royal Institute of Technology, Sweden; Complutense University of Madrid, Spain; Technical University of Madrid, Spain; University Carlos III of Madrid, Spain; University of Nancy I Henri Poincare, France; University of Stuttgart, Germany

WOP-P - European Master on Work, Organizational, and Personnel Psychology

<http://www.erasmuswop.org>

Coordinator - University of Valencia, Spain.

Partners - University of Barcelona, Spain; University of Bologna, Italy; University of Paris 5 Rene Descartes, France; University of Coimbra, Portugal



2010 Courses

DILL - International Master in Digital Library Learning

<http://dill.hio.no/>

Coordinator - Oslo University College, Norway (Co-ordinating institution)

Partners - Tallinn University, Estonia; University of Parma, Italy

MA-LLL European Master's in Lifelong Learning: Policy and Management

<http://www.lifelonglearningmasters.org/>

Coordinator - The Danish School of Education, Aarhus University, Denmark (Co-ordinating Institution)

Partners - University of Deusto, Spain; Institute of Education, University of London, United Kingdom

EURHEO - European Masters in Engineering Rheology

<http://www.eurheo.eu/>

Coordinator - University of Minho, Portugal

Partners - University of Calabria, Italy; University of Huelva, Spain; Joseph Fourier University/Grenoble Polytechnic Institute, France; University/Grenoble Polytechnic National Institute, France; University of Ljubljana, Slovenia; Catholic University Louvain, Belgium
Catholic University Leuven, Belgium

EMGS - Global Studies - A European Perspective

<http://www.uni-leipzig.de/gesi/emgs/>

Coordinator - University of Leipzig, Germany

Partners - London School of Economics And Political Science, United Kingdom; Wroclaw University, Poland; Macquarie University, Australia; University Of Stellenbosch, South Africa; University Of Vienna, Austria; Roskilde University, Denmark; Dalhousie University, Canada; University of California, Santa Barbara, United States; Jawaharlal Nehru University, India; Fudan University, China

IMQP - International Master in Quaternary and Prehistory

<http://web.unife.it/progetti/erasmusmundus/index.htm>

Coordinator - University of Ferrara, Italy

Partners - National Museum of Natural History, France; Rovira I Virgili University, Spain; Polytechnic Institute of Tomar, Portugal; University of Tras-Os-Montes And Alto Douro, Portugal; University of The Philippines Diliman, Philippines

Continued



2010 Courses (continued)

EURO CULTURE - MA in Euroculture

<http://www.euroculturemaster.org/>

Coordinator – University of Groningen, Netherlands

Partners - Uppsala University, Sweden; University of Deusto, Spain; University of Göttingen, Germany; Jagiellonian University, Poland; Palacky University of Olomouc, Czech Republic

IMRD - International Master of Science in Rural Development

<http://www.imrd.ugent.be/>

Coordinator – Ghent University, Belgium

Partners - Humboldt University Berlin, Germany; Agrocampus Ouest, Rennes, France; Slovak University of Agriculture in Nitra, Slovakia; University of Pisa, Italy; Wageningen University, Netherlands; University of Pretoria, South Africa; University of Agricultural Sciences Gkvk Bangalore, India; Escuela Superior Politecnica Del Litoral, Ecuador; Nanjing Agricultural University, China; China Agricultural University, China

SAMC - Advanced Masters in Structural Analysis of Monuments and Historical Constructions

<http://www.msc-sahc.org>

Coordinator – University of Minho, Portugal

Partners - Czech Technical University in Prague, Czech Republic; Technical University of Catalonia, Spain; University of Padua, Italy

SUFONAMA - Sustainable Forest and Nature Management

<http://www.sufonama.net/>

Coordinator – University of Copenhagen – Center for Forest, Landscape and Planning, Denmark

Partners - University of Göttingen, Germany; University of Padua, Italy; Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Sweden; School of Environment and Natural Resources, University of Wales, United Kingdom