Decision of the Accreditation Commission of AQAS
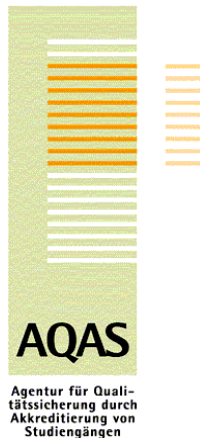
on the study programmes:

"Public Sector Innovation and e-Governance (PIONEER)" (M.Sc.)

offered by **Westfälische Universität Münster, Germany**

in cooperation with

Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Belgium

Tallinn University of Technology, Estonia

Based on the report of the expert panel and the discussions of the Accreditation Commission in its 71st meeting on 14./15. May 2018, the Accreditation Commission decides:

1. The study programme **"Public Sector Innovation and e-Governance" (PIONEER)** with the degree "**Master of Science**" offered by **Westfälische Universität Münster** in cooperation with Katholieke Universiteit Leuven and Tallinn University of Technology is accredited according to the criteria and procedures defined in the European Approach for Quality assurance of Joint Programmes.

   The accreditation is **conditional**.

   The study programme essentially complies with the requirements defined by the European Approach for Quality assurance of Joint Programmes and the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) in their current version. The required adjustments can be implemented within a time period of nine months.

2. The condition has to be fulfilled. The fulfilment of the conditions has to be documented and reported to AQAS no later than **28 February 2019.**

3. The accreditation is given for the period of **six years** and is valid until **30 September 2024**.

Conditions:

1. The levelling phase of different incoming qualifications in the first semester needs to be restructured in a way that assures to a higher extend that students will have adequate qualification levels to follow the advanced courses.

2. The examination regulations have to be published.

The Accreditation Commission added condition number two, as based on the report of the experts the criterion "Transparency and Documentation" is only partly fulfilled.

The following **recommendations** are given for further improvement of the programme:

1. Education on scientific working and methods should be integrated in the compulsory parts of the curriculum.

2. The existing module "database management" should be replaced with a more suitable module on "information management".

With regard to the reasons for this decision the Accreditation Commission refers to the attached assessment report.

Experts' Report

on the master degree programme:

"Public Sector Innovation and e-Governance (PIONEER)" (M.Sc.)

offered by **Westfälische Universität Münster, Germany**

in cooperation with

Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Belgium

Tallinn University of Technology, Estonia

Visit to the University: December, 12 – 13, 2018

Panel of Experts:

Univ. Prof. Dr. Dennis Hilgers	Johannes Kepler University of Linz, Faculty of Social Sciences, Economics and Business, Institute of Public and Non Profit Management, Austria
Prof. Dr. Maria A. Wimmer	University of Koblenz-Landau, Faculty of Computer Science, Institute of Information Systems, Germany
Andre Saint Ange	Revenue Department Hamburg, Department for Budget and Task planning (representative of the labour market)
Christopher Bohlens	Student of economics at the Leuphana University of Lüneburg (student expert)

Coordination:

Ronny Heintze	AQAS, Cologne, Germany

I. Preamble

The accreditation procedure covers Bachelor and Master programmes at state (public) or state (publicly) -recognised universities.

All Bachelor and Master programmes must be accredited in Germany by law, as laid down in the statutes of the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Federal States (Länder) in the Federal Republic of Germany (Kultusministerkonferenz).

Each federal state implements these rules and regulations in accordance with their own respective Higher Education law.

The evaluation of the study programme was carried out in accordance with the "Rules for the Accreditation of Study Programmes and for System Accreditation" (version of 20th February 2013) taking into account the specific rules and regulations for Joint Programmes. The European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes was uses as framework defining the specific procedures and criteria.

II. Accreditation procedure

This report results from the external review of the master programme in "Public Sector Innovation and e-Governance (PIONEER)" offered by Westfälische Universität Münster, Germany in cooperation with Katholieke Universiteit Leuven (Belgium) and Tallinn University of Technology (Estonia).

1. Criteria

The assessment of the programme is in accordance with the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes, which has been approved by the European Higher Education Area ministers in May 2015. Following this methodology a Joint programme is reviewed at once including all partners of the consortium and covering the totality of the programme. The decision that is based on this approach shall then be accepted by the relevant accreditation/evaluation bodies of all participating partners. In this case the result of this procedure will primarily affect the Westfälische Universität Münster since Katholieke Universiteit Leuven does not require a programme based accreditation at this time. For Tallinn University of Technology legal requirements on the national level avoid the acceptance of the results of the procedure.

2. Approach and methodology

Initialisation

Westfälische Universität Münster mandated AQAS to perform the accreditation procedure in January 2017.

The university prepared a Self Evaluation Report (SER). In January 2017, the university handed in a draft of the SER together with the relevant documentation of the study programme and an appendix.

The appendix included an overview over statistical data of the student body, CVs of the teaching staff, information on student services, core information on the main library and undergraduate academic regulations.

AQAS reviewed the SER draft for completeness, comprehensibility and transparency and the accreditation procedure was officially initialised by a decision of the AQAS Accreditation Commission on February 21st, 2017. The final version of the SER was handed in in November 2017.

Nomination of the expert panel

Composing the expert panel follows the stakeholder principle. Consequently representatives from the respective discipline/s, the labour market and students are involved. Furthermore, AQAS follows the principles for the selection of experts by the European Consortium for Accreditation (ECA).

The Accreditation Commission nominated the expert panel in June 2017. AQAS informed the university thereafter about the members of the expert panel and the universities did not raise any concerns against the composition of the panel.

Preparation of the site visit

Prior to the site visit, the experts reviewed the SER to get an overview of upcoming points of discussion during the site visit. Prior to meeting representatives of the programme, the panel met to discuss the SER and the relevant criteria to prepare the interviews.

Site visit

After review of the Self Evaluation Report, the site visit to the university took place from December 12-13, 2017. On site, the experts interviewed in separate discussions different stakeholders, such as the management of the university, the programme management, teaching and other staff as well as students, and consulted additional documentation as well as examples of work from student's achievements. Representatives from all three universities were interviewed. The visit concluded with presenting preliminary findings by the experts to the university's representatives.

Report writing

Following the site visit, the expert group drafted the following report assessing the fulfilment of the European Approach criteria for programme accreditation. The report included a recommendation to the Accreditation Commission. The report was sent to the university for comments.

Decision

The experts' report, together with the comments by the university, form the basis for the AQAS Accreditation Commission to make a decision regarding the accreditation of the programmes. Based on these documents, the Accreditation Commission decided on the accreditation in May 2018. AQAS forwarded the decision to Westfälische Universität Münster. The university had the right to appeal against the decision or any of the imposed conditions.

In June 2018 AQAS published the report and the accreditation result of the accreditation along with the names of the panel of experts.

III. General Information on the University

PIONEER is an international joint Master programme developed and offered by the three universities Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven (Belgium), and Tallinn University of Technology (Estonia) that is coordinated by KU Leuven. The programme leads to a Joint Degree from the three participating universities.

The part of the PIONEER programme at the University of Münster is offered by the Department of Information Systems as part of the School of Business and Economics at the University of Münster.

The field of Information Systems covers the design, introduction and evaluation of intra- and inter-organisational information systems and – as an interdisciplinary, application-oriented subject – connects the research and teaching of Business and Economics, in particular Business Administration, with that of Computer Science. By the end of 2016 the Department consists of 8 professors, 17 postdoctoral faculty members and 59 doctoral candidates.

The aim of the Department is to offer a broad business and IT education with an international focus. This is true both with regard to the broad scope of the foundational teaching content and the specific domains, which range from public administration and commerce to telecommunications.

At KU Leuven the programme is based in the Faculty of Social Sciences that is home to approximately three thousand students, about fifty professors and two hundred research assistants. The faculty's objective is to contribute to the quality of society and analyse and inform societal trends through its education and research. Their programmes are supposed to be closely linked to current events. Students shall closely track the developments of contemporary, fast-paced and changing society. PIONEER is coordinated by the Public Governance Institute of the Faculty of Social Sciences.

At KU Leuven the second research institute involved in the programme is the Leuven Institute for Research on Information Systems (LIRIS). It was founded in 1987 and is a research group of the Department of Decision Sciences and Information Management (Faculty of Business and Economics). The research expertise and scientific capacity of LIRIS cover the following key issues: (1) fundamental issues of information and information systems in organisations (dealing with concepts, models, generic methods, tools and techniques); (2) applied research (from general research to specific problems and application areas); and (3) research on the evaluation, use and implications of information systems throughout society. The major research topics include information architecture and models; data and content management; business rules, processes and decisions; intelligent information systems, data and process analytics. Business processes management, modelling, mining, architecture and analytics are the key areas of expertise in this research group.

In Estonia PIONEER is part of the Ragnar Nurkse Department of Innovation and Governance (RND) that is one of the four departments under the School of Business and Governance of the Tallinn University of Technology. It is comprised of five chairs: Governance; Public Management and Policy; Regional Development; Innovation Policy and Technology Governance; Philosophy. In the academic year 2015/2016 the academic staff of RND involves 7 full professors, 3 visiting professors, 1 associate professor, 4 senior research fellows, 3 lecturers, 53 research fellows and 98 junior research fellows. Established in 1992, RND is the only institution in Estonia, which teaches Public Administration on all three study levels.

The mission of RND is to offer the multidisciplinary field of public administration in all its facets, to offer tuition at all levels of higher education based on research and academic activities, and to render services to society which are based on research, instruction and development activities. To fulfil the mission, the BA and MA curricula aim to provide students a comprehensive understanding of the theoretical foundations, structure and managerial processes of society and state. The latter shall provide underlying support for practical knowledge and skills in public administration and thereby contribute to improving the quality of the Estonian public service and the professional development of the civil service.

IV. Eligibility of the study programme

Description

The Erasmus Mundus Master of Science in Public Sector Innovation and e-Governance is organised jointly by the KU Leuven, the University of Münster and the Tallinn University of Technology. The KU Leuven acts as the coordinating institution of the consortium that is composed of representatives from the three participating institutions. The concept of the study program has been jointly developed by the three partner universities. The course programme reflects the comprehensive strengths of the partner universities. All activities and events are held in English.

Upon graduation students receive a Joint Degree that is awarded by all three participating institutions.

PIONEER includes a number of joint activities and measures in order to achieve the interdisciplinary objective: In order to create insight into the different elements of the programme, students have to move from university to university, because of the specialisation of each university being an important asset to the outcomes of the programme. The involved research institutes of the KU Leuven deliver their expertise in respectively public administration, public management, information systems and management informatics. The Department of Information Systems at the University of Münster contributes in the fields of Information Management and Information Systems. Tallinn University of Technology contributes expertise in e-Governance and the associated applications.

At each university, students are supposed to be confronted with the prospective research expertise and will have the opportunity to use it specifically for the interdisciplinary research seminar and the preparation of their master thesis. The three universities are involved in the different parts of the programme, which should be proof of its joint character and integration: in the integrated research seminar where students work on selected topics; in the master thesis wherein each university is represented in the jury; and in several courses (for instance the Capita Selecta course) where the universities provide guest lectures in each other courses.

To foster the jointness of the Master's programme, the course Integrated Research Seminar was especially designed for PIONEER. While visiting all three universities students will work in groups on one topic per group throughout the first three semesters. At every university the topic will receive a different focus. As a result, students will have the opportunity to study a specific topic from three angles, which would allow them to have an integrated view on a certain issue after three semesters, and which would be a solid preparation for the master thesis.

The cooperating institutions agreed on relevant issues concerning a jointly offered Master's programme in a Consortium Agreement. These issues cover: Denomination of the degree awarded in the programme, coordination and responsibilities of the partners regarding management and financial organisation, admission and selection procedures for students, mobility of students and teachers, examination regulations, student assessment methods, recognition of credits and degree awarding procedures.

Experts' Evaluation

The Panel of Experts carefully assessed that the three institutions that offer the joint programme are recognised as higher education institutions by the relevant authorities of their countries. As documented by the universities, their respective national legal frameworks enable them to participate in the joint programme and award a joint degree. The experts at this time have no doubt about the correctness of the documentation and hence the legal foundation and appropriateness. The University of Münster received a exceptional approval from the Ministry of Education in North

Rhine Westphalia to start the programme already in 2017 although an accreditation certificate is yet missing.

The experts positively assess that the programme is truly delivered by all three partners and already the design of the programme shows their joint involvement. In this case the combination of the different strengths of the partners lead to a truly new programme resulting in a new qualification for graduates.

Upon graduation students receive a Joint Degree that is awarded by all three participating institutions. In addition it can be stated that all three participating institutions award a degree that belongs to the higher education degree systems of their countries.

The experts also carefully reviewed the cooperation agreement by the three partners. It clearly outlines the degree and its denomination while also specifying appropriately the responsibilities of the different partners as well as admission requirements and selection methods. Examination and recognition also covered appropriately in the agreement.

Conclusion

The criterion of Eligibility is fulfilled.

V. Learning outcomes

Description

With reference to the Framework for Qualifications in the European Higher Education Area the PIONEER learning outcomes are defined as follows. Students:

- demonstrate an advanced understanding of and insight into the scientific disciplinary knowledge specific to public management, administration and eGovernance.

- demonstrate specialised knowledge in public administration processes, and will be able to dissect organisational processes to its basic units in order to improve organisational efficiency and effectiveness.

- have mastered general competencies at an advanced level and have thereby the capacity for problem solving thinking. They will have an ability to define and analyse public sector processes and to seek for efficiency and effectiveness losses in order to formulate possible improvement mechanisms

- have learned how to acquire relevant knowledge, how to build rapid proof of concepts, how to reflect on their approaches, how to question their assumptions and how to assess their ideas. They will be able to implement and define new methods and techniques for the benefit of a particular sector. They will be able to translate new techniques successfully given their profound knowledge of the sector they are dealing with.

- demonstrate a comprehension to a higher level how ICT and information sciences can be used in order to innovate proactively in a changing society the public sector.

- demonstrate a profound level of methodological and research skills in order to start a PhD in one of the described domains.

- demonstrate excellent communication and project management skills and are able to work in different fields in terms of culture and work context.

While studying in the PIONEER-programme, students have to attend and pass several different examination types to demonstrate their overall scientific capabilities. The achievement of the outlined learning goals (sophisticated knowledge, trained in research and good communicator) is tested through these examinations.

The programme does not intend to qualify for a regulated profession under the European Union Directive 2005/36/EC.

Experts' Evaluation

The experts positively assess that overall, the learning outcomes are convincingly specified and match with the modules and courses in the study programme. The intended outcomes clearly meet the requirements for the Master Level of the European Qualifications Framework. The Programme foresees building up the competencies and skills (sophisticated knowledge, advanced training in research, excellent communication skills) through the three semesters at the different study sites. The defined outcomes do not only cover generic skills but appropriately reflect the expectations of field specific to the discipline.

At this time the programme has just started, consequently the level of achievement of the intended outcomes can only be assessed to a limited extend considering plausibility and based on the discussions with students during the site visit. Based on these sources the intended outcomes seem demanding but realistic and hence achievable. One doubt of the experts regarding achievement was discussed in different meetings during the site visit and could not fully be dispelled. Students arrive to the programme with various different backgrounds – academically but also culturally with regards to public administration. While this diversity clearly is a strength it also creates a challenge: In order to achieve the demanding outcomes students need to develop a common ground very quickly so that in advanced semesters subsequent courses and modules can be passed at equal pace. The current way to address the leveling through the capita selecta may only be the second best way to reach a comparable level of knowledge and also research methods. Students (and also teaching staff) explained how the diverse backgrounds lead to a process where students also assist each other as the strengths of the one meat the shortcomings of the other. While the experts also support this advanced system of self study, it also indicates that the current leveling concept of the programme should be improved. **(Finding 1)**

Conclusion

The criterion is partly fulfilled.

While generally the achievement of the outcomes seems plausible, the diversity of possible entry requirements requires a stronger levelling in the first phase of the programme.

VI. Study programme

Description

The programme applies the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) with a total of 120 ECTS-credits. Each semester consists of a regular amount of 30 ECTS-credits.

One study year's effort amounts to 1500-1800 hours of work. Consequently, the whole course corresponds to 3000-3600 hours of work. In detail, the effort per ECTS-credit is defined as follows:
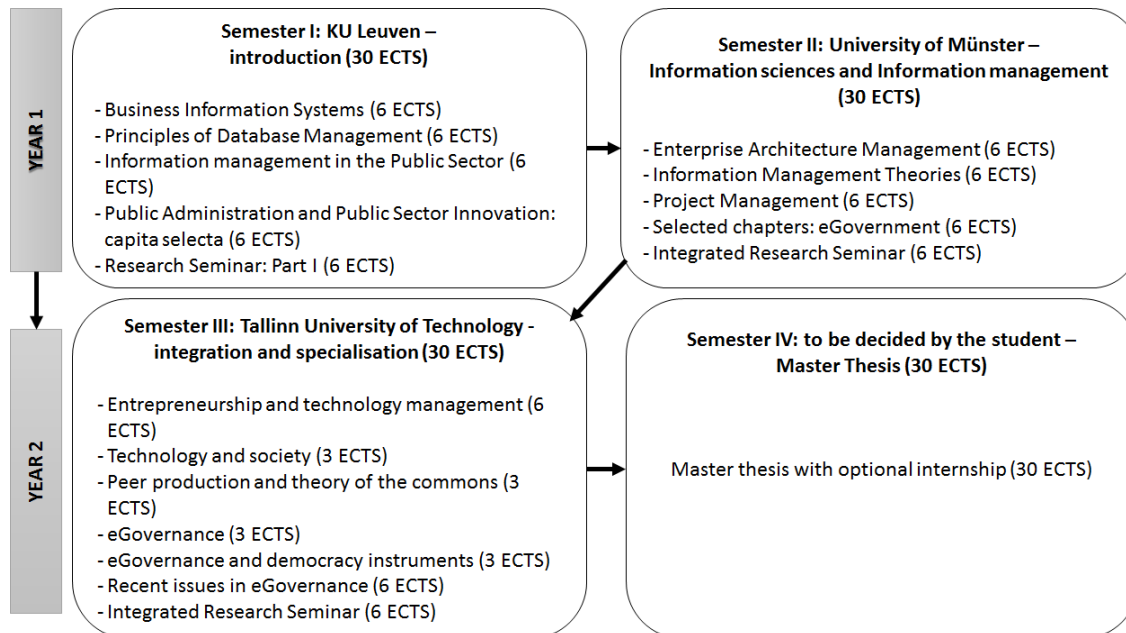
- KU Leuven: 25-30h/ECTS-credit defined by responsible lecturer

- University of Muenster: 30h/ECTS-credit

- Tallinn University of Technology: 26h/ECTS-credit

- For the master thesis, a common workload of 26h/ECTS is defined.

The curriculum contains the following educational blocks:

- Introduction at the KU Leuven (30 ECTS)

-    Information Science at the University of Münster (30 ECTS)

-    eGovernment and eGovernance at the Tallinn University of Technology (30 ECTS)

-    Master thesis (30 ECTS).

The two year programme is structured as outlined in the following chart:

YEAR 1

Semester I: KU Leuven – introduction (30 ECTS)

- Business Information Systems (6 ECTS)
- Principles of Database Management (6 ECTS)
- Information management in the Public Sector (6 ECTS)
- Public Administration and Public Sector Innovation: capita selecta (6 ECTS)
- Research Seminar: Part I (6 ECTS)

Semester II: University of Münster – Information sciences and Information management (30 ECTS)

- Enterprise Architecture Management (6 ECTS)
- Information Management Theories (6 ECTS)
- Project Management (6 ECTS)
- Selected chapters: eGovernment (6 ECTS)
- Integrated Research Seminar (6 ECTS)

YEAR 2

Semester III: Tallinn University of Technology - integration and specialisation (30 ECTS)

- Entrepreneurship and technology management (6 ECTS)
- Technology and society (3 ECTS)
- Peer production and theory of the commons (3 ECTS)
- eGovernance (3 ECTS)
- eGovernance and democracy instruments (3 ECTS)
- Recent issues in eGovernance (6 ECTS)
- Integrated Research Seminar (6 ECTS)

Semester IV: to be decided by the student – Master Thesis (30 ECTS)

Master thesis with optional internship (30 ECTS)

Experts' Evaluation

There is consensus amongst the expert group that the structure and content of the curriculum fits to enable the students to achieve the intended learning outcomes while considering the above mentioned requirements for a stronger levelling approach in the first phase (**compare Finding 1**). The curriculum offers a scientific course of studies that enables to continue either with a Ph.D. programme or to work in the public administration practice arena, qualified with solid knowledge of IT Management and new facets of innovation. By intense use of seminars and interactive lectures the students gain a comprehensive interdisciplinary insight into technical inspired public administration reforms and gain soft skills to work as a communicator (and consequently) as a leader in a public sector organisation. The programme itself is very innovative as it deals with the potentials and constrains of digital transformation in the public-administrative system.

Recognizing the well structured approach of the programme with a balanced qualification profile one issue the consortium should consider in their future planning is the integration of a course or seminar only dealing with research methods and scientific working. The intended high standards will challenge students coming from a different field background. It might be wise to address this issue not only as an additional voluntary offer (as it currently exists) but instead making scientific work and methods as integral part of a master programme. **(Finding 2)**

From an experts point of view the currently used module "Database management" in the future could be replaced with another more suitable module on 'information management' (or similar), since the current database lecture seems too technical for the study programme and may challenge students with different non-technical backgrounds **(Finding 3)**. While it is not wrong to be included, clearly this point marks some room for future improvement.

From on formal point of view, the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) is properly applied and the distribution of credits is clear. The different workload per credit point is transparently described and results from the different cultures in the higher education systems of the participating partners. The workload is appropriate for a joint master programme which is typically about 90-120 ECTS-credits. With 120 ECTS-credits this program has a correct workload which is transparently presented in the self-documentation. The workload and the average time to complete the programme will be monitored in this program.

Conclusion

This criterion is fulfilled.

The consortium should however consider implementing a single course or seminar only dealing with research methods and scientific working as the programme also enables graduates to continue with a Ph.D. programme.

VII. Admission and recognition

Description

The general admission is granted at the KU Leuven according to Belgian law in line with the following requirements:

- fulfils the general requirements at KU Leuven, where the preliminary checks on completeness and eligibility are done.

- has a first academic bachelor degree (min. 180 ECTS) in public administration, social science, political science, information systems, information science, informatics, engineering, business, law. Other applications will be taken into consideration depending on the other selection criteria. The admission policy is intended to ensure equal opportunity of access to higher education for qualified students.

- proves a good command of English, both spoken and written. All non-native English speakers are required to submit an English proficiency test (C 1-level according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages).

Following enrolment at KU Leuven students will also be enrolled at the University of Münster and Tallinn University of Technology.

Students can apply for an exemption from a course, given previous studies and work experience. If applications are consented by the Academic Committee, consideration of previous studies or work experience shall take place in accordance with the procedures established at the university, which is responsible for providing the concerned course(s).

Experts' Evaluation

The admission process is well defined and transparent. From the experts point of view it also seems that criteria are applied consistently. The relevant documents are published and are shared by all three institutions. Should any changes be made, this will be discussed in the relevant committees with representation of all consortium partners. The main responsibility for admission lies at the KU Leuven and the corresponding regulations under Belgian law. This is also referred to in the cooperation agreements.

On the positive side, the admission criteria regarding a previous Bachelor degree in the respective discipline are very wide-spread. This leads to a wide field of students with different CVs and previous study programs. This also makes it possible to address the largest possible target group of students. Flipping the coin, these very much appreciated broad admission requirements also lead to very different expectations and perceptions of what is required and what will be delivered.

In this context it might also be helpful for the programme to draft a document outlining a typical set of skills and qualifications that the programme builds upon. This will create transparency for potential students about where they might still have to compensate besides fulfilling the formal entry requirements.

For new students, an introduction within the first days of study is offered at the beginning of the semester. This introduction also includes information about all three partner institutions and seems vital from the expert's point of view. During this phase students are familiarized with the different aspects of studying at three different institutions.

Recognition procedures are regulated. The regulations regarding re-sits, disability compensation, illness and other circumstances are written down in the regulations and transparent to all stakeholders.

Conclusion

So this criterion is fulfilled.

The experts recognize that students are well prepared; the admission process is defined and transparent. There are no doubts that the recognitions procedures and regulation are not consequently applied. The experts perceived a truly collaborative spirit amongst the partner universities clearly facilitating this process.

VIII. Learning, Teaching, Assessment

Description

All students start their first semester at the KU Leuven. For the second and the third semester, students move, respectively to Münster and Tallinn. The last semester is dedicated to their master thesis. All students select their Individual Study Plan in the KU Leuven database for the full duration of the programme, including the courses that are followed at the Consortium partners.

The consortium has selected four broad academic subjects upon which this program has been built: (1) public governance (PG), (2) information management and information sciences (IS), (3) technology and digital evolutions for the public sector (T&DPS), (4) public sector innovation and e-Governance (PSI & e-Gov). The first topic focuses on public management and public governance and is based on the expertise from the PA side of the consortium. The second topic is based on the expertise on Information Systems that is present in the consortium. The third and the fourth topic in the program are the integration of the different expertise involved: 'technology and digital evolutions for the public sector' emphasizes the present and future role of IT, technological/digital innovation for public administrations; 'public sector innovation and e-Governance' deals with the integration of IT for innovation and the successful implementation of e-Governance for public sector purposes.

In Leuven, the four subjects are introduced. In Münster, the focus is on the subjects of Information Systems and Technology and digital evolutions, while Public Sector Innovation and e-Governance will be referred at and briefly introduced. In Tallinn the main focus is on Public Sector Innovation and e-Governance, while Technology and digital evolutions are focal points as well.

In general, the courses are planned to be flanked with guest lecturers from outside the consortium. The consortium outlines that overall about 30 organizations like private companies working in the field and from public bodies like ministries stated their willingness to support the programme by guest lectures, offering internships, optionally combined with Master Thesis topics.

In order to assure transparent and far assessment, the consortium developed a translation table of national grades, based on ECTS, in order to harmonize the different national grading scales.

Experts' Evaluation

The consortium with KU Leuven, WWU Münster and Tallinn University of Technology represents a well balanced team to run the study programme and in this combination the learning opportunities for students are very good due to the different teaching profiles of the institutions. The appropriate teaching methods implemented at the institutions create the additional benefit for the students to learn in different contexts thus profiting from cultural differences in student/teacher interaction. Vice versa it can also be recognized that the consortium is well aware of the diversity in students backgrounds and adapts accordingly.

The teams at the three sites clearly demonstrate the necessary competencies in the four fields of study integrated into this programme. The team also demonstrates good networks to public administrations and related IT and consulting industry working with public sector reform so to ensure practical insights into the field of study besides the research oriented teaching and learning.

The introduction of the translation table of national grades into the other national grading scales is an important component to ensure transparency on grading in different countries and cultures. The experts positively assess the solutions found for a transparent and consistent approach in grading. Assessment is adequate in its orientation towards the intended qualifications.

Conclusion

The criterion is fulfilled.

The consortium fully achieves the learning, teaching and assessment criterion. The team of teachers consists of renowned and highly expert members in the respective fields of study compiled into this programme.

IX. Student support

Description

The student support includes jointly offered services such as insurance, a joint starting ceremony, one programme website and counselling over the whole course of the programme as well as individual services offered by the partner institutions. At every intake, a joint starting ceremony will take place in Leuven, where all students will be jointly welcomed by representatives from all involved universities. Besides, a single point of contact for PIONEER in general as well as the counsellors at every university will be introduced to the students.

Lecturers from the consortium will actively take part in the teaching of the programme at not their home-institutions. This way the students can get in close contact to the lecturers from the upcoming semesters and can clarify open issues in advance on a bi-lateral and/or personal base. Once students reach a new university a guided tour on the campus and the city of Leuven, Münster and Tallinn is supposed to be organized. Additionally it is planned that students will be assisted actively by the different universities with respect to their visa application, residency permit and other papers when necessary.

Furthermore a jointly developed website is supposed to provide the students with the latest and up-to-date information about the programme as well as important dates and deadlines. On that website all relevant information on housing, study guidance, etc. will be provided for every university.

Experts' Evaluation

Central student advisory service is available. There are various counselling and care offers at the universities through central facilities (examination office, International Office, study counselling, child care, social counselling). Within the programme, students will require special support, especially with the associated change of university and country. The universities describe various measures to assist and guide students in this regard and the expert's panel concludes that there is good awareness towards the special requirements resulting from the joint character of the programme. Also there are sufficient resources available to provide individual assistance, advice and support for all students. With regard to the search for internships, students receive support from various sources. As students come from different countries of origin, they also receive support with regard to VISA matters. Support for the search for housing is also made possible, because every semester a new apartment in a new country is necessary. As an example, all students of the PIONEER degree program at KU Leuven are housed in a dormitory on the campus. At the University of Münster the students of the programme are part of a priority list for students for housing.

There is an elected student representation at programme level. Also students are represented as partners in the relevant committees. Students can participate in the steering committee and there is even a reimbursement of travel costs which the experts believe is a sign of a true commitment to students' involvement. Positive recognition should be given to the implemented buddy system in that is student run.

Students have access to the resources of the university they are currently enrolled in. As they are constantly enrolled in all three universities from the first day they have access to all three resources. The first batch of student experienced some challenges with this regards but discussions on site showed that the consortium is able to react flexibly and implement solutions in the interest of students.

The students reported that the contact persons and teachers were very easy to reach and rated the support as well as academic advice system as good. The experts perceived a strong and trustful relationship between students and teaching staff. Also, the support function of the coordinators should be mentioned. It is an integral part of the success of the programme and not only an Erasmus Mundus requirement.

The success of PIONEER will largely hinge on how the students from around the world will be able to adapt to the different cultural challenges in three different European countries while only living a couple of months in each. If the logistics of transfer and acclimatisation get in the way of academics, the students and PIONEER could suffer. The experts have observed a good set of support offers foreseen by the consortium to address these challenges and the experts want to underline that they share the view, that it is integral an integral duty of the consortium not to neglect this reality.

Conclusion

The criterion is fulfilled. In the experts' opinion, the student support is well founded and the different dimensions of student support and advice are taken into account.

X. Resources

Description

From the different institutions a total core staff of 13 academics will be involved in the delivery of the programme. With very few exceptions all teaching staff are Professors of the participating institutions while all teaching staff holds at least a PhD. The research specializations of the staff

cover areas as e-Governance, Technology and Society, Information Management Technologies, and Public Sector Innovation. The full academic CV of all teaching staff is documented in the SER.

Students can use the central and decentral libraries of all three universities which includes the access to ICT equipment relevant for the field of studies.

The Consortium Agreement also covers the topics of financial resources in order to create transparency.

Experts' Evaluation

General resources

The three Universities that are jointly offering the PIONEER programme all have a track record of excellence. They are major institutions of higher education in their respective countries and can offer a large range of resources to students and academy alike.

The Katholieke Universiteit Leuven is Belgium's largest University that supports more than 57.000 students and has in excess of 11.000 employees. In addition to 78 bachelor programmes there are over 170 master's programmes on offer, with an additional eight Erasmus Mundus degree programmes.

There are ten different libraries accessible to the students and a wide ranging IT support Infrastructure.

The Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster has 44.000 students that are studying a broad array of nearly all contemporary subjects. In the fifteen faculties there are over 280 degree programmes on offer.

The school of Business and Economics is centered at the Leo campus in multiple modernized buildings in which the students not only have access to the faculty library but also to the University and State/Regional Library with its 5 million volumes of scientific literature.

The faculty offers 83 PC-workplaces in addition to 35 places in the computer lab of the department of Information Systems that all access all the student support and study infrastructure.

The Tallinn University of Technology is the smallest among the three institutes, jointly offering the PIONEER degree. With its roundabout 12.500 students in 106 curricula it is however far from being minor. The Tallinn University of Technology is the foremost institute in Estonia for University degrees in Engineering, Manufacturing and Technology, Architecture and Building, Physical Sciences, Transport Services and Business and Administration.

The University maintains a central library with 500 study places and a computer lab with access to all University support systems as well as too many databases in the fields of public administration and government. The Ragnar Nurkse School of Innovation and Governance runs its own IT support unit.

Specific resources

One of the largest challenges the consortium faces is to provide the diverse international student body PIONEER hopes to attract with adequate support structures and thus allocate the necessary resources to this task.

The students accepted to PIONEER's initial semester come from a wide range of nationalities and cultural backgrounds. English as the programmes chosen language will not be the first language of most and the Flemish, German or Estonian will be foreign to them. The joint nature of the pro-

gramme with the students moving to a new country and university every semester makes the dedication of specific resources to support the students a priority.

All three universities have extensive experience in supporting international students. The offers range from legal advice and help with local community regulation to buddy programmes and housing centres. The Ragnar Nurkse School of Innovation and Governance even has a faculty made up of roundabout 40% international members.

Resources dedicated to PIONEER include an especially dedicated local coordinator to help with organisational issues, priority with finding boarding and support dealing with Visa and other immigration requirements.

The academic staff members associated with the programme are led by academics of international reputation and the students will also be able to receive lectures from non-academic experts in their respective fields. When it comes to the qualitative dimension of staff the expert groups comes to a very positive conclusion.

Conclusion

This criterion is fulfilled.

The resources the members of the consortium have at their disposal are extensive. All three are not only major players in their respective countries but also by regional and European comparisons. All three have exhaustively detailed their capabilities in the Self Evaluation Report and have provided no reason to doubt their dedication to PIONEER. The consortium agreement as an annex to the Report provided a very good guidance while evaluating this point.

While the start in Leuven seems to have been successful it is up to the universities to ensure that the level is kept for future years.

XI. Transparency and Documentation

Description

The programme uses the internet as one of the key channels to provide transparency and deliver information to students and potential students. Relevant documents are published on a programme specific PIONEER website. Here also information on admission, selection criteria, and study-structure is available. Course descriptions are also published on the websites of the individual faculties while examination regulations- in the case of Münster University - can be found at the website of the central examination office.

Experts' Evaluation

The entire curriculum and the relevant module descriptions are available online using the PIONEER website. At the time of the site visit the specific examination regulations were not yet published in the legally binding form, as the WWU intends to be able to react to input coming from the accreditation procedure. This can then be directly processed in the regulations. A draft has been handout to the students at the beginning of course of studies to guarantee a required minimum of certainty of law, a practice that seems reasonable from the expert's point of view.

While all formal requirements towards the documentation of courses are positively fulfilled, the consortium might consider a harmonisation of the descriptions of the modules in the module handbook, so that the expectations and conditions to pass a module are clearly understandable at each institution in a comparable way. As students have to move from one place to the other a harmonized way of descriptions within the programme will also strengthen the perceived programme identity. The descriptions should include module objectives and outcome, teaching forms, evaluation criteria, data about workload and periodicity and literature information.

Lastly, to increase transparency for potential students and also in reflection of the innovative character of the programme, the consortium should consider making even more clear for what professions and job profiles the study programme qualifies.

Conclusion

This criterion is fulfilled.

The specific examination regulations still have to be published, which will have to happen for legal reasons anyway.

XII. Quality Assurance

Description

PIONEER is monitored at three levels: at the local programme level, at the consortium level, and at the institutional level. These levels are supposed to be interacting with each other in an open communication.

Local Programme Level: On a regular basis, short questionnaires are supposed to be administered to the students about the quality of the courses, covering aspects such as the quality of teaching, the quality of exercises and labs, the quality of the study material, the quality of the examination and the study load for each course. This is done based on the regulations already established at the three participating institutions.

Institutional Level: The programme is also supposed to be subject to an external quality assurance procedure organised at the institutional level. In this process, the curriculum as a whole is evaluated based on a SWOT analysis, carried out by extensive hearings, questionnaires, study load measurements, etc. Students, staff, alumni and other stakeholders are involved.

Consortium Level: The established Steering Committee is responsible for quality assurance at the consortium level. It concerns the continuity of the programme; the execution of quality related decisions taken by the consortium; the coherence of the programme and its educational framework; the evaluation and monitoring of the quality of the courses. The Steering Committee initiates at a regular basis a thorough curriculum evaluation, resulting in an internal review report. This can be done in coordination with an institutional initiative.

The quality assurance on the consortium level is prepared by the evaluation reports on local programme level. Every single course evaluation will be handed to a specifically established educational board. Focus will be on courses evaluated less than a good overall evaluation grade. These evaluations will be discussed in detail together with the responsible lecturer. Based on the result of the discussion, there can be different proposals for further consideration.

To safeguard quality also an Advisory Board as well as an Academic Committee are used.

Experts' Evaluation

From the experts point of view it became obvious, that quality assurance is clearly at the forefront of the consortiums minds, as it plays a major role in the Self Evaluation Report. It can be positively recognized that the word "Quality" is found in 147 places in the report which speaks for at the dedication the universities show towards the importance of "Quality".

While assessing the tools of quality control for PIONEER one has to differentiate between the levels it is assessed at.

At the *institutional level* the universities are compelled to adhere to national laws and European regulations. There are appropriate procedures in place for academic institutions to earn and keep

the right to provide higher education as well as programmes with which universities can enhance their reputation and the important state funding. The institutions are looked at and certified on a regular basis and there is no reason to believe that these established standards are not adequately fulfilled.

At the institutional level each member of the consortium has implemented own standards of quality control and assurance, has formulated and implemented a strategy for the qualification of the teaching staff and ensures the whole curriculum is evaluated in an ongoing process.

At the *programme level* the quality of PIONEER will be assessed based on every individual course as well as the programme in whole.

The intention is that the students will be asked to participate in answering short questionnaires that cover different aspects of the course they have visited. These can include for example the quality of teaching, the quality of study material, the workload or the quality of the examination. These questionnaires will be integrated in the already existing quality control framework of the three participating universities.

Based on these questionnaires each institution will evaluate the programme individually. A SWOT analysis is conducted with –among others- "extensive hearings", aforementioned questionnaires and study load measurements. Apart from the students these analyses will include other stakeholders like staff and alumni.

The experts positively recognize that at the consortium level all decisions concerning the quality assurance of PIONEER are taken by the Steering Committee. They are supported by the advice of the Advisory Board and the Educational Board who, among other responsibilities, will consider all the individual course evaluation reports and if necessary suggest changes to an individual course in consensus with the lecturer or even to the overall curriculum. A focus will be laid on courses with negative evaluation results.

The overall responsibilities assigned with in the Consortium Agreement to the Steering Committee do not infringe on the individual universities obligations to ensure the programme adheres to their institutions own quality standards and the individual students rights to appeal via the established escalation processes.

To ensure a regular exchange between the three universities the consortium has not only agreed to a consistent schedule of meetings but also that lecturers from institutions not yet tasked with a certain student group participate in courses at the other universities. The quality requirements of examinations and course expectations are detailed in the module descriptions. As many courses already exist within the universities "regular" roster of master programmes, these have already undergone formal quality control procedures.

Based on the documents presented, there is no reason to doubt the capabilities for each institution to include the new aspects of PIONEER within their existing quality control framework. As with many other aspects, the challenge will be to organise and ensure a transparent and interorganisational process that can not only take qualified decisions based on structured and in-depth feedback but also maintain a standard of quality so that PIONEER can succeed on the marketplace and also remains in the best interests of the participating institutions.

The Self Evaluation Report details the intentions of the consortium and it contains many tasks that need to be executed for the theoretical plans to succeed. It remains to be seen if the organisations can maintain the level of dedication shown in the report and the personal interview, or if the acting persons change the intensity will start to dwindle.

A three nation master programme with ever changing responsibilities, for ever changing student bodies is a challenge for all aspects of the programmes structure. But assuring quality will be unique task as the distance between the campuses and the nature of the programme will mean

that ensuring that the right information is always available in a timely manner so that quality control can be successfully implemented will require to keep the high level of commitment.

Conclusion

The criterion is fulfilled. Recognizing the high standards set by the consortium it will be wise to have a keep the monitoring system implemented to make sure the intended standards will be fulfilled.

XIII. Recommendations of the panel of experts

The panel of experts recommends to accredit with conditions the study programme "Public Sector Innovation and **e-Governance (PIONEER)" (M.Sc.)** offered by Westfälische Universität Münster, Germany in cooperation with Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Belgium, and Tallinn University of Technology, Estonia.

Findings:

1. The levelling phase of different incoming qualifications in the first semester needs to be restructured in a way that assures to a higher extend that students will have adequate qualification levels to follow the advanced courses.

2. Education on scientific working and methods should be integrated in the compulsory parts of the curriculum.

3. The existing module "Database management" should be replaced with another more suitable module on "information management".