



AGENTUR FÜR
QUALITÄTSSICHERUNG DURCH
AKKREDITIERUNG VON
STUDIENGÄNGEN E.V.

EXPERTS REPORT

TRANSCULTURAL EUROPEAN STUDIES: LANGUAGES, CULTURES AND INTERACTIONS (TES/ETE)

OFFERED BY

EUROPA UNIVERSITY FLENSBURG

UNIVERSITÉ DE STRASBOURG

UNIVERSIDAD DE MALAGA

Assessment following the European Approach
for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes

March 2023



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DECISION OF THE AQAS STANDING COMMISSION ON THE STUDY PROGRAMME

- “TRANSCULTURAL EUROPEAN STUDIES: LANGUAGES, CULTURES AND INTER-ACTIONS” (BACHELOR OF ARTS)

JOINTLY OFFERED BY

- THE EUROPA-UNIVERSITÄT FLENSBURG (EUF), GERMANY,
- UNIVERSITÉ DE STRASBOURG (UNISTRA), FRANCE,
- UNIVERSIDAD DE MÁLAGA (UMA), SPAIN.

Based on the report of the expert panel, and the discussions of the AQAS Standing Commission in its circular procedure from 29 March to 6 April 2023, the AQAS Standing Commission decides:

1. The study programme “Transcultural European Studies: Languages, Cultures and Interactions” (Bachelor of Arts) jointly offered by Europa-University Flensburg (EUF), Université de Strasbourg (UNISTRA), and Universidad de Málaga (UMA) is accredited according to the criteria and procedures defined in the European Approach for Quality assurance of Joint Programmes.
The study programme 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.
2. The accreditation is given for the period of **six years** and is valid until **30 April 2029**.

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

1. In the future development of the programme the consortium should consider entry requirements of potential master programmes beyond the participating universities with regard to the disciplinary expectations to increase transferability of graduates.
2. In the future development the labour market perspective should be included in the quality assurance procedures for the programme to a larger extent.

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

Preamble

AQAS – Agency for Quality Assurance through Accreditation of Study Programmes – is an independent non-profit organisation, supported by more than 90 member institutions, both higher education institutions (HEIs) and academic associations. Since 2002, the agency has been accredited by the German Accreditation Council (GAC). It is therefore a notified body for accreditation of higher education institutions and programmes in Germany.

AQAS is a full member of ENQA and also listed in the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR) which confirms that our procedures comply with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG), on which all Bologna countries agreed as a basis for internal and external quality assurance.

AQAS is an institution founded by and working for higher education institutions and academic associations. The agency is devoted to quality assurance and quality development of both academic studies and teaching in Higher Education Institutions. The activities of AQAS in accreditation are neither restrained to specific academic disciplines or degrees nor to a certain type of Higher Education Institution

I. Accreditation procedure

This report results from the external review of the **BA** programme in **Transcultural European Studies: Languages, Cultures and Interactions** offered jointly by Europa University Flensburg, Université de Strasbourg, and Universidad de Malaga.

1. Criteria

The programme is assessed against the criteria defined by the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes. The criteria are based on the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) 2015.

2. Approach and methodology

The initialisation

The university mandated AQAS to perform the accreditation procedure in May 2021.

The University consortium produced a Self-Evaluation Report (SER). In June 2021, the consortium delivered a draft of the SER together with the relevant documentation of the study programme and an appendix.

The appendix included e.g.:

- Information on the status of the institutions,
- The cooperation agreement including the specific supplement)
- CVs of the teaching staff
- Quality Guidelines for further education programmes
- Examination regulations
- Admission regulations

- A sample diploma supplement

The accreditation procedure was officially initialised by a decision of the AQAS Standing Commission in August 2021.

AQAS scrutinized the SER regarding completeness, comprehensibility and transparency. The final version of the SER was handed in January 2022.

The nomination of the panel of expert

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

In December 2021 the Standing Commission nominated the following expert panel.

- Prof. Dr. Britta Schneider, Europa Universität Viadrina, Chair of Language use and Migration, Faculty of Cultural Sciences
- Prof. Dr. Olivier Agard, Sorbonne (France), Discours de la Kulturkritik
- Prof. Dr. Natalià Català Torres, Universitat Rovira i Virgili (Spain), Profesora Titular de Lingüística, Facultat de Letras
- Dr. Michael Baer, Head of Studienförderwerk Klaus Murmann, Stiftung der Deutschen Wirtschaft, Berlin, (Representative of the labour market)
- Florian Melcher, Student at TU Chemnitz (Student representative)

AQAS informed the university about the members of the expert panel and the consortium did not raise any concerns against the composition of the panel.

The preparation of the site visit

Prior to the site visit, the experts reviewed the SER and submitted a short preliminary statement including open questions and potential needs for additional information. AQAS forwarded these preliminary statements to the University and to the panel members in order to increase transparency in the process and the upcoming discussions during the site visit.

The site visit

After a review of the Self Evaluation Report, a virtual site visit to the University took place from on 23./24. February 2022. During the meetings, the experts interviewed different stakeholders, e.g. the management of the HEI, the programme management, teaching and other staff, as well as future students in separate discussions and consulted additional documentation. The visit concluded by the presentation of the preliminary findings of the group of experts to the consortiums representatives.

The report writing

After the site visit had taken place, the expert group drafted the following report, assessing the fulfilment of the AQAS criteria for the programme accreditation. The report included a recommendation to the Standing Commission. The report was sent to the consortium for comments.

The decision

The report, together with the comments of the university, forms the basis for the AQAS Standing Commission to make a decision regarding the accreditation of the programme. Based on these two documents, on 28 August 2022 the Standing Commission postponed a final decision on the accreditation based on the findings presented in the following report. AQAS forwarded the decision to the university. The university had the right to appeal against the decision of the postponement.

Following the postponement of the decision the university implemented adjustments in the proposed study programme and delivered an updated SER in December 2022. The expert panel carefully reviewed the updated documents and in February 2023 decided that the procedure could continue based on paper and no additional site visit would be required. In March 2023 the panel of experts continued with the assessment of the updated document and updated the preliminary experts report to reflect the implemented adjustments. The report was agreed by the expert panel and following a decision of the AQAS standing commission published together with the result of the accreditation and the names of the panel of experts.

II. General Information on the Universities

The Bachelor Plus Transkulturelle Europastudien: Sprachen, Kulturen, Interaktionen (TES) / Études transculturelles européennes: Langues, cultures, interactions (ETE) / Estudios transculturales europeos: Lenguas, culturas, interacciones (ETE) / Transcultural European Studies: Languages, Cultures and Interactions (TES) is a trinational, four-year fulltime study programme taught on location at three European universities:

- Europa-Universität Flensburg (EUF), Germany,
- Université de Strasbourg (UNISTRA), France, and
- Universidad de Málaga (UMA), Spain.

Each university admits 20 students per year. Admission is granted at the beginning of each academic year. Upon successful completion of the programme the consortium awards students a joint Bachelor of Arts. The programme takes place under the umbrella of the Franco-German University (DFH), which is explained to provide the consortium and the students with financial and administrative support.

The joint programme (hereafter abbreviated as TES/ETE) is an interdisciplinary, German-French-Spanish degree programme, which focuses on cultural, literary and media studies as well as languages and plurilingual skills. Studying at three European universities along with the study programme's orientation towards the areas of languages, culture, literature, and media in the European intercultural and transcultural contexts enables students to deal with historical, contemporary, and future European issues in a global context in a theoretically, practically, and methodologically reflective manner in four European languages: French, German, Spanish, and English.

III. Assessment of the study programme

1. Eligibility

1.1 *The institutions that offer a joint programme should be recognised as higher education institutions by the relevant authorities of their countries. Their respective national legal frameworks should enable them to participate in the joint programme and, if applicable, to award a joint degree. The institutions awarding the degree(s) should ensure that the degree(s) belong to the higher education degree systems of the countries in which they are based.*

1.2 The joint programme should be offered jointly, involving all cooperating institutions in the design and delivery of the programme.

1.3 *The terms and conditions of the joint programme should be laid down in a cooperation agreement. The agreement should in particular cover the following issues:*

- *Denomination of the degree(s) awarded in the programme*
- *Coordination and responsibilities of the partners involved regarding management and financial organisation (including funding, sharing of costs and income etc.)*
- *Admission and selection procedures for students*
- *Mobility of students and teachers*
- *Examination regulations, student assessment methods, recognition of credits and degree awarding procedures in the consortium.*

Description

As the SER describes that for several years now, Europa-Universität Flensburg, Université de Strasbourg and Universidad de Málaga have been cooperating to jointly design an innovative and integrated curriculum for the newly established study programme. The partners developed joint criteria for the selection and supervision of students, they agreed on measures to prepare and support student mobility; they are also closely cooperating with regard to conducting joint colloquia, conferences and final examinations.

The terms and conditions of the joint programme are laid down in the Cooperation Agreement (CA). According to the SER, the CA as well as the Joint Study and Examination Regulations Framework (JSER) have been jointly developed; regulations aim to guarantee a high level of integration and interconnectedness in teaching and research between the three universities. The CA regulates, among other things, the Denomination of the degree(s) awarded in the programme (§ 1), the coordination (§ 3) and responsibilities of the partners involved regarding management (§ 13) and financial organisation (§ 16), the admission and selection procedures for students (§§ 5 and 6) and the mobility of students (§§ 7 and 8). The recognition of credits earned at the three universities is secured through the integrated study plan and the programme structure (§ 7).

In line with § 9 of the CA, the partners have agreed on the JSER as the authoritative framework for the programme. In the JSER, examination regulations and student assessment methods are laid down. Technically, the implementation of a single, tri-national regulation into three national frameworks is currently not possible, therefore the implementation is done at respective national levels and local guidelines. Changes to the JSER, however, require the approval of the Programme Committee.

The partners agreed to issue a joint degree and laid this down in the Cooperation Agreement (§ 11). The partners agreed that joint diploma documents will be prepared and issued by UNISTRA. As diploma documents will first be issued in 2026 at the earliest and according to the SER all institutions involved are legally entitled

to participate in joint degrees programmes, the partners agreed to have logistical procedures in place well ahead of the first cohort's graduation day.

The different annexes explain the status of the institutions and their respective recognition as higher education institutions in their respective national framework. They also outline that the Bachelor degree belongs to all of these systems and can be awarded by each institution.

Experts' Evaluation

From the expert's point of view the eligibility of the programme is clearly given. A strong point of this joint project is that the three universities have a great deal of experience in setting up international programmes, such as Erasmus Mundus, bilateral MAs and BAs, double degrees. As the experts learned during the interviews, Strasbourg already has two other trilateral programmes. Therefore, it can be concluded that administratively the three universities are used to the legal and administrative problems implicated by running and offering a joint programme.

All three institutions are recognized as higher education institutions and the Bachelor degree belongs to each of their systems. Also, the panel found no reason that would prevent one of the partners from participating in a joint degree.

Another strong point is that the project is clearly the result of a real cooperation between the three universities and that there is a real will to work together and to develop strong ties. This includes the joint design of the programme as well as its delivery. Based on the provided documents but clearly as a result from the interviews, the experts conclude that the three universities are committed to solve the problems linked with the necessity of combining three national regulations and there is a true spirit of cooperation.

The provided cooperation agreement was reviewed by the experts and addresses the required points in a comprehensive way.

Conclusion

The criterion is fulfilled.

2. Learning Outcomes

2.1 The intended learning outcomes should align with the corresponding level in the Framework for Qualifications in the European Higher Education Area (FQ-EHEA), as well as the applicable national qualifications framework(s).

2.2 The intended learning outcomes should comprise knowledge, skills, and competencies in the respective disciplinary field(s).

2.3 The programme should be able to demonstrate that the intended learning outcomes are achieved.

2.4 If relevant for the specific joint programme, the minimum agreed training conditions specified in the European Union Directive 2005/36/EC, or relevant common trainings frameworks established under the Directive, should be taken into account.

Description

The SER describes that the intended learning outcomes of the TES/ETE programme correspond to the FQ-EHEA's first cycle (EQR level 6) as well as to the following national qualification frameworks:

- Germany: Qualifikationsrahmen für deutsche Hochschulabschlüsse (as of 16.02.2017)
- Spain: Marco Español de Cualificaciones para la Educación Superior. Real Decreto 1027/2011, de 15 de julio
- France:
 - Cadre national des grades de licence et de master (du 27 janvier 2020),
 - Décret n° 2019-14 du 8 janvier 2019 relatif au cadre national des certifications professionnelles et
 - Licence - Langues, littératures et civilisations étrangères et régionales (LLCER) (fiche nationale RNCP24508)

A learning outcome matrix explains the alignment of the programme learning outcomes to the respective qualifications framework.

In its SER, the University consortium describes that the intended learning outcomes of the programme fall into six different categories. Three of these categories are described to be central, because they focus on the core topics of the study programme: Students acquire in-depth knowledge relating to European transcultural dimensions on the basis of the disciplinary fields of Linguistics, Literature, Cultural Studies and Media Studies (LO 2). They will gain a specific linguistic profile and basic to enhanced proficiency in three European languages (LO 1) and, due to the trinational orientation of the course of studies in three European countries, broad pluricultural competences and in-depth transcultural knowledge (LO 3). After initially describing eight intended learning outcomes the updated learning outcomes are specified as:

- LO 1 – Language Competence: Students acquire proficiency in three important European languages, French, Spanish and German, and develop a plurilingual language profile leading to the following proficiency levels: L1: mother tongue or CEFR level C1, L2: CEFR level C1, L3: CEFR level B2.
- LO 2.1 – Basic Subject Knowledge and Competences: Students acquire basic subject knowledge in the disciplinary fields of Linguistics, Literature, Cultural Studies and Media Studies (key concepts, methods, theories, research domains etc.). They acquire basic knowledge of European concepts/narratives as well as of geographical, historical, political and socio-cultural aspects pertaining to selected individual European countries, especially to France, Spain and Germany.
- LO 2.2 – In-depth Subject Knowledge and Competences: Students deepen their knowledge and competences in the areas of cultural transfer processes, questions of translation/transmission, materiality of communication in Europe, literatures in European comparison, in-depth study of regional studies and cultural history of Spain (with reference to selected Spanish speaking countries) and Germany, concepts of interculturality in European contexts, diachronic perspectives on "Classical roots of Europe and History of Arts" and "History, Geography and History of Arts" in Europe.
- LO 3 – Pluricultural Competence and Transcultural Knowledge: Students acquire in-depth pluricultural competences, with a focus on the three languages and cultural areas of France, Spain and Germany.
- LO 4 – Academic and Methodological Skills: students acquire basic academic skills (e.g. literature research, compiling bibliographies, citation norms, text excerpts, learning skills, reading techniques, academic writing, scientific presentation). They become acquainted with relevant tools to strengthen their media literacy and digital literacy (e.g. podcast production, editing programmes, (big) data analysis tools). They avail of basic knowledge of the differences in academic traditions, teaching/learning and examination formats, especially in France, Spain and Germany. Students gain a basic overview about theoretical and methodological approaches linked to the disciplines involved in the programme and become aware of the culture- and language-specific differences in this field.
- LO 5 – Skills for Professional Life: Students carry out application-oriented study projects and contribute to the solution of complex tasks in teams. In the context of problem-based learning, where possible carried out in cooperation with institutional partners in the respective region (e.g. museums, theatres,

cultural or educational institutions), students acquire the ability to use their linguistic competences, subject-specific competences and methodological skills in a problem-solving-oriented manner and to act cooperatively and purposefully in a team, also with non-university partners.

- **LO 6 – Research Competence and Skills for Further Studies:** Students acquire a wide range of learning skills and research competencies that provide them with the best possible qualifications for further studies at master level with a high degree of autonomy. The acquisition of learning skills is facilitated by a variety of teaching/learning formats; various examination formats (oral presentation, oral examination, essay, term paper, project report, etc.) are used to continuously assess whether the qualifications required for further studies have been achieved.

The study programme is orientated towards the areas of languages, culture, literature and media in a European context. Students acquire basic and in-depth knowledge in linguistics, literature, cultural studies and media studies; especially the disciplinary sub-areas of literary theory and literary history, text linguistics, philosophy of language, translation studies, media theory, film and media history, cultural theories, postcolonial and gender studies are addressed.

Accompanying measures to support students in achieving the learning outcomes and qualification goals include a close support network and a mentoring programme, peer mentoring as well as curricular and extra-curricular opportunities to meet students of different cohorts, e.g. in order to form joint learning and support groups.

Experts' Evaluation

From an expert's point of view the field of study requires a certain broadness, and with languages, cultures and interaction on a trans-European level defining specifics of the qualification indeed can be challenging. During the discussions with the involved staff the general idea behind the programme was clearly visible and it fits very well to implement it in a joint programme with universities from different European countries. After the first discussions some room for development and need to increase the specificity of the back than eight ILOs were identified.

With the updated list of learning outcomes, the panel of experts clearly sees a development towards a more differentiated approach that manages to synthesize while at the same time differentiate the intended outcomes. In the updated version clearly, the overlap is resolved. The outcomes still tend towards a processual and slightly descriptive nature; however, the intended outcomes are clearly identifiable and particularly with regard to the language levels defined and measurable. This is an important element to later demonstrate achievement. Consequently, the panel of experts support the newly defined outcomes and confirm that they comprise knowledge, skills, and competencies in the respective disciplinary field on Bachelor level.

Also, the specified outcomes to a very large extent reflect the nature and strengths of the programme benefiting from different institutions contributing to it. They fit very well to the transcultural concept and its realization in the study programme. The updated learning outcomes, strongly in line with the discussions during the virtual site visit match the actual strengths of the study programme, e.g., the acquisition of in-depth knowledge of different academic cultures and the acquisition of competences, different traditions, and genres of academic writing.

Overall, the panel concludes that the newly presented learning outcomes now also cover well the aspect of intercultural learning and knowledge about different cultural as well as institutional traditions. In addition, it reflects that students learn to understand problems from the perspective of different disciplinary angles. The expert panel is pleased to see how the consortium found ways to enhance the initially defined outcomes to be more specific and thus also provide a clearer profile of the qualification.

Recognizing that generally it is challenging to assess achievement of learning outcomes before a programme has started, with the now realized specificity of the intended learning outcomes the expert panel assesses that with the presented curriculum it is feasible and likely that the intended outcomes will be achieved.

The experts agree with the consortium that European Union Directive 2005/36/EC has no relevance for the programme under review.

Conclusion

The criterion is fulfilled.

3. Study Programme

3.1 The structure and content of the curriculum should be fit to enable the students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

3.2 The European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) should be applied properly and the distribution of credits should be clear.

3.3 A joint bachelor programme will typically amount to a total student workload of 180-240 ECTS-credits; a joint master programme will typically amount to 90-120 ECTS-credits and should not be less than 60 ECTS-credits at second cycle level (credit ranges according to the FQ-EHEA); for joint doctorates there is no credit range specified. The workload and the average time to complete the programme should be monitored.

Description

The jointly developed and in parts jointly taught curriculum builds on three pillars: 1.) Language acquisition, 2.) Europe, and 3.) Culture, language, literature, arts, media. The partners' individual contributions to the study programme take the threefold structure of the curriculum into account.

Students stay at least for one full academic year at each of the three participating universities. After spending the first year at the home university, which is usually the institution in the country of their first language (L1), their further mobility path depends primarily upon their language proficiency. They spend the second year in the country for which they have the better language skills (L2). There they continue to gradually improve the level of their third language (L3) before they move on to the third partner university. In the seventh semester, students complete a project-based internship, preferably in a European country. In the eighth semester, they write their Bachelor thesis at one of the partner universities.

While the SER describes that the single institutions' areas of expertise and emphasis differ, the overall study structure is the same regardless of the chronological order of studying at the three universities. In the first semester, the focus is on language acquisition on the one hand and academic immersion and the acquisition of basic knowledge in the fields of study on the other. Students familiarise themselves with standards and techniques of academic work and the basics of text analysis, as well as with central theories and concepts of linguistics, literature, cultural studies and media studies. In addition, during the first semester students gain basic knowledge of the above-mentioned disciplines' focus on Europe. Topics addressed in the first semester includes, for example, ideas of Europe and European intellectual history, linguistic reflection, awareness of language and linguistic discussions, language, culture, literature and media in Europe, European institutions and translation studies.

For each of the three institutions there is an ideal typical study plan showing how the curriculum progresses with the different areas of competency development. During the seventh semester, a project-based internship for a minimum duration of eight weeks has to be completed in L2 or L3, preferably in a European country. It serves students to identify potential fields of employment and support their choice of a thematic focus in their Bachelor thesis. It also aims at further enhancing the competencies students have acquired in their studies. After completing the internship, students submit a report evaluating the work environment, linking it analytically and critically to the issues discussed in the study programme and presenting the small-scale project they have conducted.

The final semester is dedicated to thesis writing and to holding the joint conference. Bachelor thesis colloquia support the process of developing a research question and the writing process; the thesis defence completes the studies. Depending on a student's home institution, the study plans slightly differ as partners set different emphasis.

As part of the update of the concept the consortium has agreed on a binding language progression scheme listing the language proficiency level to be reached at different stages of study. The scheme also details measures ensuring that it will be respected and the support measures for students imminent to fail the proficiency level expected.

As described in the SER, the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) is fully implemented in the three national legislative frameworks for Higher Education concerned here. Consequently, the three partner universities are familiar with the ECT system and apply it properly. The distribution and acquisition of credits is made transparent in the module handbook. For each module it indicates the number of credits and the workload expected from students.

Students need to collect a total number of 240 credit points in order to be awarded the joint Bachelor's Degree, the standard period of study is four years. The curriculum is designed in a way that allows students to earn 30 credit points per semester. At all universities one credit point corresponds to 25 to 30 hours and the workload per semester consists of an average 750 to 900 hours, i.e. a total of 6.000 to 7.200 hours for the full degree.

Experts' Evaluation

From an expert's point of view the overall concept of the programme and the joint implementation of the curriculum changing cities and countries annually is straightforward and highly attractive to students. The study programme is convincing on a meta-level and students will develop an interdisciplinary understanding of culture and language research in different national environments. This is highly appreciated and makes the programme stand out in comparison to other Bachelor programmes.

Initially an area of concern was the required language proficiency of students in the three languages required to succeed in the programme. The careful analysis of the curriculum had identified language proficiency as prerequisite for achieving the academic learning outcomes of the programme and initially the programme took a strongly supportive approach towards language acquisition, without putting a strong emphasis on assuring and guaranteeing a predefined level. Following the discussions during the virtual visit and enhancing the concept of the programme the updated language acquisition scheme is transparent and adequately clear as well as measurable. There is a clear progression scheme. This is required to follow the curriculum at later stages to achieve the more (inter-)disciplinary learning outcomes. Structures of support for students with problems in acquiring a language are implemented and thresholds assuring that content of classes can be understood in the respective other languages are well in place. It can be positively highlighted that in the first year, the study plans at all three universities contain specific language courses in the languages of the other two partner universities and English. All modules in the 'Language Acquisition' pillar and the constant use of CLIL methodologies in all other modules aim to prepare students for their first stay abroad by enhancing their L2 language

skills and also contribute to a continuous language acquisition in L3. By the end of the first year, students who have passed these modules successfully have at least achieved level B2 (L2) and A2/B1 (L3). The panel of experts clearly support this development implemented by the universities.

This increased transparency and higher level of assurance of language proficiency will also facilitate student's understanding of different academic writing cultures in the respective countries.

Undisputedly, content-wise the demands are very high. Students are expected to get to know the disciplines of linguistics, literature, cultural studies and media studies in the first semester, in addition to a strong emphasis on language learning as well as academic writing. The updated study plans reflect a balanced combination of general introduction as well as in depth topics and the expert panel recognizes with great support that some good enhancements were implemented on module level, and formerly elective courses became compulsory.

The defined curriculum with its flexibility and choices is well balanced with required modules that contribute to shaping a clear picture of a qualification that develops along the defined intended learning outcomes. With the implemented updated curriculum also, a certain conceptual clarity becomes visible that strongly reflects also the intentions and visions discussed during the virtual site visit.

The experts agree that the universities contribute to the common qualification goal of dealing with European issues from history and the present in a practical and methodologically reflective way. While all three universities offer a focus on Cultural European Studies, Border Studies and Intercultural Communication, there are also more strongly weighted individual foci. The continuous acquisition of knowledge takes place in a complementary manner and hence accounts for the different topical expertise and the special focus of the teaching content in each university.

Furthermore, and on a very positive note, specific parts of the study programme – the writing of the BA thesis, the internship, the planning of a student conference – are very well elaborated and conceptually very convincing, the goals are clear and attractive for student's social experience, employability and academic education. Particularly the student conference and the integration of its planning fit the study concept very well and are a strong point of the programme.

One remaining issue for the future development of the programme is based in the reflection of the large inner diversity in the curriculum. In its future development the consortium should look at entry requirements of potential master programmes that could be interesting for graduates of this bachelor programme with regard to disciplinary requirements. Very often there are minimum numbers of credit points or disciplinary competencies required to enter specific master programmes, and with the broadness and trans- and interdisciplinary nature of this programme it might very well happen that graduates fail to meet these by just a small number of credits in one specific discipline. Awareness of this (potential) challenge might impact future curricular specifications or lead to specific curricular flexibility for students to design their programme in a way that potential disciplinary requirements are achieved. The consortium carefully reviewed the Master options offered by the partners themselves, but the opportunities for graduates of this demanding programme will go far beyond only the three institutions. Careful observation of graduate paths will be helpful tool and will facilitate the transition to a master programme for graduates (**Finding 1**).

Conclusion

The criterion is fulfilled.

4. Admission and Recognition

4.1 The admission requirements and selection procedures should be appropriate in light of the programme's level and discipline.

4.2 Recognition of qualifications and of periods of studies (including recognition of prior learning) should be applied in line with the Lisbon Recognition Convention and subsidiary documents.

Description

While each university's application and admission processes are independent, the overall process has been streamlined and is coordinated by the Programme Committee (CA § 5). Admission numbers, application deadlines and internal procedures are coordinated among the partner universities by the Programme Committee; deadlines and requirements are made public in advance of the application process. Students apply to the university of their choice, which is understood to be their home university.

Common application and admission requirements for the study programme are laid down in the JSER § 2; due to differing national legislation, they vary in the details. For all three universities, applicants must submit a university entrance qualification or an equivalent for application. Academic merit (i.e. average grade calculation) is the most important criterion for the selection process at all three locations. In Spain, where application and admission processes are centralised, no further application criteria can be applied; admission procedures set by regional/national regulations are mandatory. Application procedures in France are also centralised, but UNISTRA is able to also apply the jointly defined minimum language requirements based on secondary school grades. At EUF applications are sent directly to the university and sufficient language competencies have to be documented. Detailed language proficiency recommendations are planned to also appear prominently on the degree's websites.

The SER describes that based on the selection criteria a ranking list is established at each university. The partner institutions will inform each other about these lists and about the final admission decisions. It will be the task of the central coordination office at EUF to organise these exchanges in close coordination with the respective administrative offices responsible at the partner universities. There are two admission rounds. After completion of the first round, a second round is offered to students who did not receive a place at their university of choice.

The mutual recognition of achievements at the partner universities is guaranteed by an integrated curriculum and study plan as defined per the JSER (§ 5). Academic achievements obtained at another university are reviewed by the relevant programme coordination and recognised if there is no significant difference (JSER § 9). According to the SER the recognition guidelines for externally completed course work at the three partner institutions complies with the requirements of the Lisbon Convention.

Experts' Evaluation

The expert panel acknowledges not only the intention but also the implementation of a joint and shared approach for admission to the programme. To that extent it became obvious that a well-coordinated approach is in place when it comes to the intended profile of incoming students shared among all the three universities. At the same time the panel of expert concurs with the explanation of the three universities that differences in the national legislations to a certain extent limit the jointness of the admission procedures as in the end admission must follow the regulations in the home country/region of the respective university.

While in France admission can be limited and connected with a minimum requirement of language proficiency, both other partners face challenges in limiting the entry to the programme to those students who bring the desired level of language proficiency. The panel learned during the interviews that the consortium plans to respond to this challenge with increased transparency regarding the language requirements to successfully pass the programme, so that already potential students are fully aware about the specific character of this trilateral programme.

From the experts point of view it can be understood, that national regulations create limits and consequently the universities have to find ways to deal and operate within these regulations, at the same time it can be concluded that the programme has to be designed in a way that it is possible to succeed in the programme based on the legally possible admission requirements. Continuing this thought when language requirements cannot be expected at the time of admission, language proficiency is a *conditio sine qua non* once the student moves to its first mobility and has to participate in classes in foreign languages.

With the update of the curriculum and now clearly formulated language expectations and requirements connected to progression in the programme the panel feels the language challenge are well addressed by the consortium now. The progression scheme has been integrated in the relevant study documents and regulations. Students with the required language skills at the beginning of the studies can reach the required thresholds due to language courses included in the official study plan. As part of the revision of the learning outcomes and the curriculum, some of the language modules (and their descriptions) have been adapted to make the programme's expectations regarding language proficiency more transparent to applicants and students.

The experts explicitly welcome that at UNISTRA, after the revision of the course catalogue, second year students are now offered a higher number of language courses, both in Spanish and German, which are offered as electives (to choose between these language courses and translation, modules UNISTRA M7 and M11). At the same time at UMA, language courses in French (for EUF students) and German (for UNISTRA students) are now also offered. For the UMA students, English is now a compulsory part of their first year (UMA M5, previously only an elective option).

The expert panel learned from the SER but also from the discussions during the virtual visit that the consortium intends to address the potential challenge of language acquisition with increased transparency and clear guidance already in the promotion of the programme. Clearly this finds the support of the expert group. At the same time the expert panel wonders, if with these high demands of required/preferred entry qualifications the pool of baccalaureate students fitting to enter the programme might be quite limited. Consequently, and also considering the specifics of the admission requirements the panel found very little reflection of an inclusive approach and believes that in the further development of the program this might be a valuable point for discussion between the consortium partners.

Documented requirements for recognition reflect the principles of the Lisbon recognition convention.

Conclusion

The criterion is fulfilled.

5. Learning, Teaching and Assessment

5.1 The programme should be designed to correspond with the intended learning outcomes, and the learning and teaching approaches applied should be adequate to achieve those. The diversity of students and their needs should be respected and attended to, especially in view of potential different cultural backgrounds of the students.

5.2 The examination regulations and the assessment of the achieved learning outcomes should correspond with the intended learning outcomes. They should be applied consistently among partner institutions.

Description

The programme's learning environment grounds in four fundamental beliefs:

- a) TES/ETE needs to create a specific transcultural partnership between students and teachers,
- b) the programme needs a joint learning platform with low technical barriers and easy access to resources,
- c) the potentials of peer exchange and inter-cohort exchange need to be used as comprehensively as possible,
- d) students need targeted and individual support; in order to be able to concentrate on their studies, they should have to deal with as little bureaucracy as possible.

TES/ETE is described to encourage and even requires students to consider themselves part of a transcultural learning community from the very start (e.g. by means of a trinational buddy programme and learning groups); it also aims to encourage them to develop a close relationship with teaching staff at the three involved universities. As described in the SER, the learning process is geared towards supporting this process, which is explained to be also embedded in several intended learning outcomes

It is described to be the aim that the international group of TES/ETE students make their different cultural, biographical, social etc. backgrounds the subject of an ongoing self-reflection processes inside (subject-related) and outside (e.g. buddy programme) the university. Mutual respect and self-reflection in the learner-teacher relationship is considered a prerequisite for this kind of learning environment; it builds on the assumption of a shared responsibility for the learning process and is facilitated by specific learning formats, regular course evaluations and mutual feedback. (in class and in consultations hours/individual appointments).

Spending study periods at three different institutions, students are expected to familiarise themselves with three different academic traditions and practices; they will identify differences and similarities – and they will learn to confidently navigate their way through these systems; they will handle a variety of teaching and learning formats, methodical and methodological approaches, didactical tools and examination formats. To take into account students' diversity and to encourage flexible learning paths, but also in order to achieve the intended learning outcomes, the SER describes that teachers apply different learning and teaching approaches and formats, e.g.:

- Seminars including focused on plenary sessions, student presentations and text discussions respect the autonomy of learners and stress the active role of learners.
- Especially in tutorials and travaux dirigés the active role of learners is realised in interactive classes (middle-sized to small groups).
- A more compact knowledge transfer is facilitated in lectures (cours magistraux, large to middle-sized groups) and ex-cathedra teaching.

In instruction-based projects and autonomous projects the reflection and adaptation of methods can be tested and evaluated. In group and individual work, self-study and case studies, students' self- and social competencies are trained and further developed.

The implementation of joint standards and the creation of a specific learning environment are explained to be facilitated by the use of the same learning platform by the three universities (Moodle); partners are currently in the process of clarifying if a joint Moodle instance can be set up in order to simplify student access. Moodle is used both as a lecturer-students communication channel and as an organisational tool for teaching and learning activities. It is used in most classes to share resources, organise and monitor follow-up activities, provide joint calendars and if necessary, conduct online teaching.

The partners aim at full transparency regarding the expectations and assessment standards. The module handbook provides all necessary information about examination forms; in cases where several examination methods are offered, the responsible teacher defines the actual examination method and the respective deadlines within the first two weeks of a lecture period.

Examinations are usually conducted by one lecturer, only in cases of reviews or repeat examinations, a second examiner is assigned. The Bachelor Thesis is always supervised and graded by two teachers in a binational co-tutelle procedure; if the two individual grades are divergent and result in a calculated average which translates into "ungenügend"/"ajourné"/"no aprobado", a third evaluator will be appointed (JSER § 25). The thesis grade has to be justified in writing.

Experts' Evaluation

The assessment of the implemented learning methods as well as the teaching approaches and assessment is rather complex as on the one hand the panel has to consider the implemented methods and forms of teaching, while on the other hand it cannot be underestimated, that their successful participation in the different courses, seminars, and activities requires the ability of the students to understand and follow the content in the respective learning activity on an academic level.

Recognizing the high quality of the concept and foreseen didactical implementation in which students are part of creating a trans cultural learning environment and trinational buddies are available to support the learning process the panel is impressed by the high level of consistency between the aims of the programmes and their didactic implementation. It became obvious that the partners of the consortium truly created a joint concept in which experiencing different cultures of learning becomes an intrinsic part of progressing in the programme. This process is supported by appropriate examination regulations and the consortium partners are aware that the different assessment cultures might also impact consistency in the application of the assessment. This is part of the continuous exchange between the partners and probably - at a time where the programme is not yet running – addressed to the maximum extent possible. For this reason, the consortium is truly applauded with regard to using cultural diversity and making it a strength of the programme also when considering the assessment of students.

Conclusion

The criterion is fulfilled.

6. Student Support

The student support services should contribute to the achievement of the intended learning outcomes. They should take into account specific challenges of mobile students.

Description

The study programme is described to be demanding for students due to the high mobility, language and academic requirements. In this respect, an effective joint support structure is explained to be required to enable students to complete their studies successfully and within the timeframe envisaged. The SER describes that a joint support structure has been developed, which is complemented by site-specific counselling and assistance services. This special tri-national culture of support is a central element of the study programme to which - according to the SER - all three partner institutions are committed.

The following can be mentioned as central sub-areas of this joint support structure:

Accessibility: The coordination office, situated in Flensburg, is accessible to all students and prospective students on a daily basis, via email, telephone and digital and personal consultation hours. All teachers of the study programme are also available during their office hours and by appointment. The same applies to the student representatives, who should be available via email and for personal consultations.

Communication, information: A joint website for the study programme is planned to provide prospective students with all relevant information about the application, the organisation of the study programme, mobility and contact persons. In addition, students will receive a multilingual handbook at the beginning of their studies, which will make all study-relevant information accessible.

Coordinators: At each location there is at least one programme coordinator who advises and supports students in all matters in addition to the coordination office. Additionally, at each location there will be an academic coordinator who can provide support in administrative, organisational and academic questions.

Mentoring and peer-to-peer support: Each student will be assigned a member of teaching staff as mentor. The mentor will accompany the study planning and monitor the study performance and, also considering language competence, advise the student regarding his/her mobility path. Additionally, peer-to-peer support is an important element that is planned to be implemented at all three locations. The involvement of student representatives and networking across locations and cohorts are described to be of central importance.

Especially when changing places of study, students are explained to be supported both infrastructurally and academically by e.g. simultaneous enrolment. Students will simultaneously be enrolled at all three institutions. Upon enrolment at the host university, the programme coordination will guide students through the enrolment process at the two partner institutions. In this way, students will have access to all three universities' relevant digital infrastructure from the very start.

Regarding the search for accommodation, it is planned to set up a multi-lingual platform on which students of the programme can offer their rooms for exchange when they change their place of study. The exchange platform will be set up and managed by the coordination office at EUF (e.g. on the programme website)

Experts' Evaluation

It became obvious not only through the documentation but also during the very constructive discussion with the consortium that all three universities have dealt intensively with the requirements to make this special degree programme feasible. Consequently, it can be concluded that students can be helped in all kinds of situations that might relate to succeeding in the programme.

Nevertheless, it is important to recognize that from students' perspective structurally this is a very demanding degree programme. During their studies, students will not only take part in an ordinary Erasmus exchange but will study for two consecutive years at two universities that are different from their home university. This involves an immense amount of planning regarding moving abroad or financing, and existing, regular counselling services for mobility and exchange will probably be challenged with incoming students who stay for a year and within this time have to settle in while also planning to continue in the next unknown city. This experience is quite different than the one in a regular Erasmus stay. Consequently the "regular" support structures might also find its limitations.

The panel recognizes with great support that in order to provide programme specific support, a cooperation office has been established at EUF including a half-time position exclusively for the organisation of the programme and student counselling. In the area of special life circumstances (e.g. relatives in need of care), all participating universities should continue to work out possible solutions that enable students to continue to study in the programme even in cases where such situations occur.

In the area of individual student counselling, based on the provided concept and the discussions it can be concluded that all three universities have implemented well-functioning structures.

Conclusion

The criterion is fulfilled.

7. Resources

7.1 The staff should be sufficient and adequate (qualifications, professional and international experience) to implement the study programme.

7.2 The facilities provided should be sufficient and adequate in view of the intended learning outcomes.

Description

The study programme will primarily be coordinated and taught by the academic staff that established the partnership and jointly developed the curriculum and module handbook. As the SER describes their expertise is complemented by that of colleagues who research and teach in neighbouring areas relevant in the context of the intended learning outcomes and qualification goals; particular emphasis is on curricular elements that help sharpening interdisciplinary and application-oriented perspectives or that support students further developing their academic and professional profiles. In sum, the consortium believes that the staff involved is sufficient and adequate in terms of their qualification and their professional and international experience and supports this with the academic short CVs of all involved staff as an Annex to the SER.

A central coordination office will be located at EUF. EUF will also cover the related staff cost.

TES/ETE students are entitled to make use of all university infrastructure and services in Flensburg, Strasbourg and Málaga. In order to make additional resources available to the programme and the students alike, the partners will apply for grants from Deutsch-Französische Hochschule (Franco-German University) and seek Erasmus funding subsidising student mobility.

Experts' Evaluation

Based on the provided information as part of the SER and also the publicly available information on the three institutions. There is no doubt that the staff is sufficient and adequate (qualifications, professional and international experience) for the implementation of the degree. Even beyond the panel believes that based in the high quality staff the development of joint research activities might be a future option that builds on staff strengths and will also further improve the contents of the programme.

The material resources and services available at the three universities (spaces, facilities, laboratories, scientific, technical or artistic equipment, library and reading rooms, new technologies, etc.) are adequate to guarantee the acquisition of competences and the development of the planned training activities.

With the availability of different support resources it would be desirable to provide more information on support services and to specify the timetable for the mentoring programme in order to make better use of all its potential. The panel believes that once the programme starts being implemented all these aspects will come to light as they are actively being used and required.

Conclusion

The criterion is fulfilled.

8. Transparency and Documentation

Relevant information about the programme like admission requirements and procedures, course catalogue, examination and assessment procedures etc. should be well documented and published by taking into account specific needs of mobile students.

Description

The consortium explains that it aims to make all information and documentation pertaining to the study programme easily accessible. At the partner universities' websites prospective students are planned to find all relevant information concerning:

- admission requirements
- application and selection procedures and deadlines
- study plans and learning outcomes
- qualification and degree awarded
- student experience and employment prospects

It is foreseen that the central coordination office at EUF supports all partner institutions in providing correct and up-to date information through their student advisory services and on their websites. Additionally, a joint website will be set up as a central resource for the joint degree. Prospective students are also encouraged to contact the programme coordinator and lecturers at the university where they intend to start their studies in order to discuss all questions relevant to the programme.

At the beginning of their studies, students are supposed to be provided with all central information about the programme during an orientation week and can network with their fellow students, including those from previous cohorts. On the one hand this will take place locally and on site, and on the other hand via digital meetings with first-year students from the other locations.

Experts' Evaluation

All partner universities plan to provide relevant information through their student advisory services on their websites and on a joint website that will be set up as a central resource for the joint degree. Prospective students can also contact the programme coordinator and lecturers at the university where they intend to start their studies and shall be provided with all central information during an orientation week and can network with their fellow students. In the following we point out some specific information needed.

The experts reiterate what was discussed during the site visit as to relevant information on student experience and employment prospects to be clearly available to (prospective) students and the labour market. Consequently the panel of experts welcome that a joint website is currently under construction which is explained to be the main source of information for potential students. The website section "internationality and career" should truly include information on possible master's programmes (beyond the three universities) and career prospects. Particularly due to the transdisciplinary nature of the programme this is a key aspect that should be well presented in the information regarding the programme as it also shapes the perception regarding employability.

As the programme demands many organizational matters on the students side, they need information on the specific support provided and on staff members who know the procedures and regulations. The issue was already mentioned above but it is important to recognize that the availability of this information is key as the students will have increased planning needs that brings the need for high availability of information also on student support.

Within the programme – due to its specific nature - students will need clear information on who is responsible for developing the project-based internship and who evaluates their internship report, which language certificates are accepted, as well as information on data security. They need guidance on who organizes the tri-national buddy programme, on the peer-to-peer counselling networks and on how this is organized and by whom. Digital forums shall be offered and announced on the joint website, where students can exchange information about the respective academic and practical life specifics of the different locations. Here the universities need to provide information on which ones these are, how they work and who is responsible. As mentoring and peer-to-peer support is intended and each student is supposed to be assigned a member of teaching staff as mentor, students need extensive information on the procedures. As peer-to-peer support shall be implemented at all three locations, students need to know specifically how and by whom this takes place. The experts are fully aware that at this stage in the planning and preparation of the programme many of these offers can only be planned while their practical implementation will have to happen when the programme starts. However, it is important to raise awareness of the consortium that many of these aspects will not result from the regular structures and that the need for increased transparency is an important success factor of the joint programme.

Particularly important to mention is the need of students to have information on how the programme (especially the mobility of students) is financed. Beyond the 12 months of Erasmus programme, information on specific support needs to be provided. As the panel learned the University of Strasbourg offers specific funding for mobility of the students in this programme and also regional funds for travel costs. Flensburg offers special service for families and students with disabilities as well as Auslands-BaföG (state funding that is not limited to German nationality) and infra-structure that helps students to e.g. find accommodations. Malaga offers financial help complementing the Erasmus programmes and also scholarships provided by the state, including mobility funding. What costs to expect and where to look for funding shall be provided in the student handbook which will be a major part of the information campaign. It needs to be made clear that universities won't always be able to cover the entire costs, but they need to provide transparency.

For the project-based internship all three universities need active links between research and regional enterprises and also career guidance/support (support, coaching, internships etc.) as well as a network of companies that offer internships. Transparency is necessary on which universities offer a specific internship coordinator on the faculty level who helps students in finding internships and is in direct contact with the labour market.

Particular attention should be paid information on how the programme deals with students who may not be able to travel (e.g. family obligations, illness, etc.). While the panel learned during the interviews that individual solutions will be found, it is important to create prior transparency on this issue.

Another aspect that will be helpful to be part of the publicly available information are the practicalities of the certification and the award of a joint degree. While the panel learned that appropriate regulations are in place, it needs to be known from the very beginning how the joint degree is being awarded to avoid the (potential) impression of three parallel degrees being awarded.

As explained below the link to the labour market is not yet an explicitly strong point of the joint programme. This also impacts public information, as students need substantial information regarding their professional careers, which needs to be supplied by the universities. The universities need to provide extended information on labour market connections (internships etc.) and which connections to enterprises or future employers exist. Like in Malaga where a lot of initiatives locally, nationally and internationally exist. Malaga has a good connection to the labour market not only during the internship, but also part of the courses: so the different perspectives and possibilities are taught to the students from the very beginning of the programme. Strasbourg is very well accustomed to the labour market by a large network of local and international partners. Flensburg offers possibilities for an internship: German exchange service, Deutsch-frz. Jugendwerk, Norddeutscher Rundfunk, Franco-German Network. These existing strengths should become more visible.

To sum up the above-mentioned points the experts conclude that in the many aspects where increased transparency is a result of the specific nature of the programme, the consortium is aware of these needs and that many of the above-mentioned aspects are planned to be implemented and very often only require a more explicit representation in the available documents. Recognizing that the programme implementation lies still in the (not to far) future, these aspects naturally will be part of the next steps of the preparations and consequently the panel highlights these points to assure that the issues that were part of the virtual discussions are not lost but jointly agreed.

Conclusion

This criterion is fulfilled.

9. Quality Assurance

The cooperating institutions should apply joint internal quality assurance processes in accordance with part one of the ESG.

Description

In accordance with the ESG, the institutions have agreed upon joint and individual policies and processes regarding quality assurance. Quality assurance in the TES/ETE programme will be implemented through its joint bodies, i.e. the Programme Committee and the Joint Examination Committee as well as the local programme coordinators and academic coordinators in cooperation with the relevant local quality assurance management units. Based on the partners' procedures for national institutional quality assurance, the Programme

Committee – including two student representatives – develops joint quality assurance mechanisms and measures to ensure the maintenance of quality standards. Internal measures contributing to monitoring and maintaining quality standards include

- Annual meetings of staff from all partner universities involved in the teaching of the joint degree (can be done by video conference)
- Written course evaluations per semester, focusing on organisational, administrative and academic aspects of the teaching
- Programme conferences
- Quality development reports
- Complementary local measures

The consortium also envisages, once the programme has been launched, to establish an international advisory board consisting of experts in the field, professionals and alumni. The board meets every two years (ideally in connection with one of the student conferences) to initiate an audit. For this purpose, it will also receive the Programme Committee's quality development reports. Its focus will be on the overall attractiveness and topicality of the programme and the graduates' employability.

Experts' Evaluation

All three universities ensure that the quality of the degree programme at each location is jointly reviewed and developed on an ongoing basis. Classical elements of quality management such as course evaluation are used, but also special instruments such as the study programme conferences. As the expert panel confirmed during the interviews, there will also be an annual exchange between all coordinators and teachers.

As soon as the programme has started, the three universities plan to set up an International Advisory Board, which will include specialists, experts and (former) students. This advisory board is to provide important impulses for the further development of the study programme, especially in the area of professional qualification. Especially in connection with the programme conferences that take place every two years, the three universities have created an instrument that has enormous potential for the further qualitative development of the programme. If the plans are also implemented as described in the documentation, one can only express the highest praise for this.

The panel believes that based on the work with existing quality assurance structures added with specific aspects to reflect the joint character of the programme quality assurance structures are appropriate. However, even after reviewing the initiatives, there is one area that rather obviously stands out, not only with regard to quality assurance but also when considering documentation and also programme development: The relevance of the perspective of the labour market in the (continuous) development of the programme. While the University of Flensburg involves the university council (Hochschulrat) in the development of the study programmes and members of the council also include labour market representatives (e.g. entrepreneurs/media/journalism) and both other consortium partners have active links to the regional/national employers, the panel could not find a strong reflection of labour market feedback in the presented quality assurance concept. The panel clearly believes, particularly with the transcultural and transdisciplinary nature of the programme, employability should be subject to careful monitoring and the labour market perspective should be included in the quality assurance procedures for the programme to a larger extent (**Finding 2**). The initiative to set up an international advisory board including the labour market clearly is a right step, probably this perspective could already have contributed in the design phase of the programme. This will also help increasing the overall links to the labour market.

Conclusion

The criterion is fulfilled.

IV. Recommendations of the panel of experts

The panel of experts recommends

- to accredit

the study programme **Transcultural European Studies: Languages, Cultures and Interactions (TES/ETE)** offered by **Europa University Flensburg, Université de Strasbourg, and Universidad de Malaga.**

Summary of Findings:

1. In the future development of the programme the consortium should consider entry requirements of potential master programmes beyond the participating universities with regard to the disciplinary expectations to increase transferability of graduates.
2. In the future development the labour market perspective should be included in the quality assurance procedures for the programme to a larger extent.