



# European Approach

External review report for *ex ante* accreditation

<b>Programme</b>	Master in Tourism Transformations for Regenerative Futures (MATTeRS)
<b>Institutions</b>	Universitat de Girona (UdG, coordinator) University of Oulu (OU) Kenyatta University (KU) University of Mauritius (UoM)

**Date of the visit** 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2024

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# GLOSSARY

ECTS	European Credit Transfer System
EHEA	European Higher Education Area
EMDM	Erasmus Mundus Design Master
EMJM	Erasmus Mundus Joint Master
EMTM	European Master in Tourism Management
EQAR	European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education
EQF	European Qualifications Framework
ESG	Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the EHEA
HEI	Higher Education Institutions
ILO	Intended Learning Outcomes
ISCED	International Standard Classification of Education
IQAS	Internal Quality Assurance System
KU	Kenyatta University
NFQ	National Framework of Qualifications
OU	University of Oulu
QF-EHEA	Qualifications Frameworks for the European Higher Education Area
SER	Self-Evaluation Report
UdG	Universitat de Girona
UoM	University of Mauritius

# INTRODUCTION

The aim of the Master in Tourism Transformations for Regenerative Futures (MATTeRS) project is to develop an innovative, two-year (120 ECTS) joint master's programme designed to address contemporary challenges and opportunities in the field of tourism by promoting sustainable, inclusive, and regenerative tourism practices. The partner universities participating in the MATTeRS project are University of Girona in Spain (UdG, coordinator), University of Oulu (Finland), Kenyatta University (Kenya), and the University of Mauritius (Mauritius). The program builds on a network of academic and industry partnerships worldwide to provide students with comprehensive, and interdisciplinary education.

The programme has received, in order to be designed, a grant from the Erasmus Mundus Design Measures (EMDM) 2023 open call. According to the submitted proposal, the consortium of participant HEIs had to design a joint master's programme related to tourism transformations and regenerative futures. The aim of the project had to be to educate professionals with the capacities to design and manage tourism's contribution to and transition towards inclusive, just, and green futures for new kinds of resilience and prosperity in Europe and the world. This included the setting of an international educational framework between them, the definition of the teaching contents, the strategy for the accreditation of the joint master's programme by national universities and education agencies, the development of a network of industry associated partners, the exploration of the participation of other potential associated academic partners and the deployment of communication, promotion, and dissemination tools. As above mentioned, the project was selected for funding and in October 2023, the grant agreement was signed by the parties. This design is previous to the submission of the project to any further Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Call.

The received grant implies that participant universities should draw up a consortium agreement to regulate the governance of the collaboration and will design joint quality and managerial mechanisms. The participant universities are also committed to having the MATTeRS programme accredited by the European Approach of Quality Assurance, and the results of the project will be used to develop an EMJM project to ensure the long-term sustainability of the new joint master's programme.

This report is an *ex-ante* evaluation as at present, the MATTeRS programme has not been yet implemented. Therefore, the assessment is less evidence-based than an *ex-post* evaluation.

The panel based its assessment on the Standards for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), issued in October 2014 and approved by the EHEA ministers in May 2015. This European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes is intended to be applied to quality assurance of

international joint programmes when some of the cooperating higher education institutions require external quality assurance at the programme level. This procedure enables the possibility that a single evaluation process can lead to accreditation in multiple countries.

The panel members reviewed the programme's application documentation and submitted their preliminary findings to the secretary prior to the site visit. The secretary compiled and processed these findings for the preparatory meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> November 2024. Both the preparatory meeting and the site visit were conducted online. During the preparatory meeting, the panel discussed their preliminary findings, identified key issues, and planned the sessions with the delegations.

The online site visit took place on 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2024. The visit included interviews with the main stakeholders in the design stage: governing board, teaching staff and industry representatives. The visit was effective, giving the panel valuable inputs to better understand the programme proposal, and provided sufficient evidence for a positive assessment of the MATTeRS programme.

### **Basic information of the programme proposal reviewed**

**Full name:** Master in Tourism Transformations for Regenerative Futures (MATTeRS)

**EQF level:** Level 7

**Degrees awarded:** "Master in Tourism Transformations for Regenerative Futures" by the University of Girona, the University of Oulu, Kenyatta University, and the University of Mauritius.

**ECTS:** 120 ECTS- 2 years, 4 semesters.

**ISCED field(s) of study:** 031: Social and behavioural sciences, 041: Business and administration.

**Starting course:** September 2025

## Panel composition

**Chair: Salvador Anton Clavé**

Regional geographical analysis, Universitat Rovira i Virgili

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**Academic: María Eugenia Ruiz Molina**

Commercialization and market research, Universitat de València

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**Academic: Riina Iloranta**

Services marketing, service design, customer experience, Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences

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**Student: Luisa María Lanchazo García**

Ph. D. student in Tourism, Universidad de Sevilla

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**Professional: Octavi Bono Gispert**

Tourism, THR Tourism Industry Advisors

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**Secretary: Teresa Pitarch Jovani**

Methodology, AQU Catalunya

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**Observer: Sirpa Moitus**

Methodology, FINEEC

## Agenda

22<sup>nd</sup> November 2024

Time	Activity
08:00-09:00	Preliminary meeting of the panel
09:00-10:00	Meeting with programme coordinators and management team
10:00-10:15	Break
10:15-11:00	Meeting with teaching staff
11:00-11:15	Break
11:15-12:00	Meeting with employers
12:00-13:00	Internal work
13:00-13:15	Preliminary conclusions

## List of evidence

MATTeRS Self-Evaluation Report	Annex 7_Admission and selection procedures
Grading grid of the master's thesis	Annex 8_Procedure for recognition of qualifications
Annex 1_Legal status of partner institutions	Annex 9_Students assessments regulations
Annex 2_Cooperation Agreement	Annex 10_Academic staff CVs (all partners)
Annex 3_Joint programme and joint degree awarding	Annex 11_Internal quality assurance system
Annex 4_Intended learning outcomes and alignment	Annex 12_Diploma supplement (sample)
Annex 5_Course syllabi	Annex 13_University associated partners
Annex 6_Structure of the curriculum/study	Annex 14_Industry associated partners
	Annex 15_Grading grids (rubrics)
	Letters of commitment from associated partners

# ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

## 1. ELIGIBILITY

### 1.1. Status

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.

#### Evidence

The Master in Tourism Transformations for Regenerative Futures (MATTeRS) is a two-year joint master's degree (120 ECTS) coordinated by the University of Girona (Spain) together with the University of Oulu (Finland), Kenyatta University (Kenya), and the University of Mauritius (Mauritius) as consortium joint programme partners.

The Self-Evaluation Report (SER) describes the background of the joint programme. In February 2023, the University of Girona submitted to the Erasmus+ Erasmus Mundus Design Measures (EMDM) funding joint programmes' open call, a proposal for the design of a brand-new joint master programme. After the evaluation of the proposal, the project was selected for funding and in October 2023, the grant agreement was signed by the parties.

The objective of the European Approach assessment is to provide an external and expert evaluation to enhance and strengthen the program's eligibility for renewing the ERASMUS+ Label. Additionally, the objective of the European Approach *ex-ante* accreditation is to facilitate the recognition of this degree in all the countries involved, when applicable.

The institutions delivering the joint programme are recognised as higher education institutions by the authorities of their countries as stated in the SER and evidenced by the legal documents of creation of each entity provided (Annex 1).

- Universitat de Girona (UdG) was officially created by the Law of the Parliament of Catalonia 35/1991 of December 30, 1991.
- University of Oulu (OU) was officially established as a public university by the Universities Act 558/2009.



- Kenyatta University (KU) was officially established as a public higher education institution in Kenya by the Kenyatta University Act (2012), article 3.
- University of Mauritius (UoM) was officially created by the University of Mauritius Act 1971.

The respective national frameworks enable the four institutions to participate in the joint programme. Legislation in Spain, Finland and Mauritius allows universities not only to collaborate in a joint programme but also to award a joint degree as outlined in:

- Spain: 8<sup>th</sup> Additional provision of the Royal decree 822/2021 of 28 September 2021, and Article 10 of the Royal Decree 1002/2010 of 5 of August 2010.
- Finland: Section 26 of the Government Decree on University Degrees (794/2004) and related policies.
- Mauritius: University Regulations for Undergraduate and Postgraduate Education, chapter 13, article 4.

According to the SER, Kenyan universities have the authority to award joint degrees; however, no legal evidence has been presented to support this claim. Nonetheless, the report provides examples of joint degrees that Kenyan universities have been implemented with other institutions, in addition to their previous experiences in collaboration with the leading university, UdG.

Spain and Finland are signatories of the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes. Following the accreditation of the joint programme by AQU Catalunya, the programme will be officially recognized as a legal degree in both countries. Additionally, for non-European countries, the programme will undergo separate evaluations by the respective accreditation agencies in Mauritius and Kenya to obtain national accreditation, thereby granting these countries the right to award the joint degree.

Graduates will be awarded a joint diploma and a joint diploma supplement (Annex 12) issued by the coordinating institution, UdG (Annex 3). These diplomas will be integrated into the respective national systems following the agreements made by the four institutions.

## **Assessment**

The consortium has provided comprehensive evidence regarding the eligibility to carry out joint programmes.

The institutions offering the joint programme are recognised as higher education institutions by their respective national authorities allowing them to participate in and award joint degrees. Each student who successfully completes the joint master's programme will be awarded a joint diploma and a joint diploma supplement issued by UdG as coordinating institution.

The panel concludes that **the standard is compliant**.

## 1.2. Joint design and delivery

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

### Evidence

The MATTeRS Consortium —the four HEIs (UdG, UO, KU, and UoM), and associated partners— has established the working mechanisms, governing bodies, and management tools in the Cooperation Agreement (signed).

The joint programme has been designed by integrating research expertise from the University of Girona and the University of Oulu, with a strong emphasis on the inclusion of global perspectives. Particular attention has been given to expanding the programme’s relevance to regions in the Global South by including the University of Mauritius and University of Kenya as partners. Both institutions have a proven track record of successful collaboration as associated partners in a current programme led by the University of Girona, the European Master in Tourism Management (EMTM).

Full partners of the consortium have all played an instrumental role in the joint programme’s design, implementation, teaching organization, and administrative support. Associated university and industry partners have been included as consultants in the design process and are considered participants in the delivery of the joint programme in various capacities. However, even though in pages 25-27 is explained the role of associated partners in the design process, it is recommended to list the specific inputs they have provided to shape the joint programme.

Particularly, the role of the associated university partners is not clearly defined neither in the design of the joint programme nor in the governance, mainly with regard to their engagement during the joint programme’s implementation beyond their potential participation as secondment institutions for master’s thesis and project development placements.

Several governing bodies oversee the programme: the Consortium Secretariat, the Consortium Assembly (which includes an Academic Board and an Administrative Board), as well as Student and Industry Advisory Boards directly linked to the Academic Board, and four Local Academic Committees. The Consortium Secretariat, responsible for coordinating and managing the programme, includes two representatives solely from the coordinating higher education institution (University of Girona).

The roles and responsibilities of the Student and Industry Boards are not well-defined, leading to ambiguity in their contribution to the overall governance and decision-making processes of the joint programme.

The proposal includes support letters from the following university associated partners:

- University of Cambridge (United Kingdom)
- Arizona State University (United States)

- Thompson Rivers University (Canada)
- University of Cape Coast (Ghana)
- University of Botswana (Botswana)
- University of Gondar (Ethiopia)
- University Technology Malaysia (Malaysia)
- National University of Mongolia (Mongolia)
- Jamia Milia Islamia (India)
- University of Sousse (Tunisia)
- Uppsala University (Sweden)
- University of Gothenburg (Sweden)
- University of Sao Paulo (Brazil)
- Sun Yat Sen University (China)
- University of Johannesburg (South Africa)
- University of Otago (New Zealand)

The proposal includes support letters from the following industry associated partners:

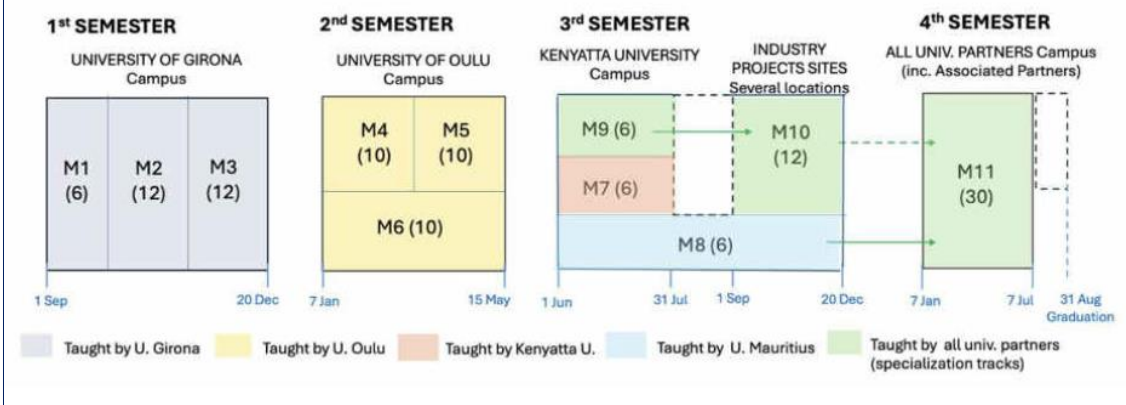
- Global Tourism Resilience and Crisis Management Center (GTRCMC)
- The Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA)
- Digital Tourism Think Tank (DTTT)
- Transformational Travel Council (TCC)
- Regenerative Travel (RT)
- The Postgrowth Institute (PGI)
- Sustainable Tourism International (STI)
- European Region for Competitive and Sustainable Tourism (NECSTouR)
- Travel Corporation and Tread Right Foundation (TC)

There are two institutions that have yet to sign the commitment letters:

- University of the West Indies (Caribe)
- Commons Network (CM)

The roles of the partners in the program's delivery are based on the students' mobility paths across the four semesters (Figure 1, Cooperation Agreement):

## MATTeRS PROGRAMME STRUCTURE OF STUDENTS MOBILITY PATHS



- The first academic year will be jointly delivered at the UdG (S1, 30 ECTS) and at the OU (S2, 30 ECTS).
- In the third semester (S3, 30 ECTS), KU will host students in Nairobi for Module M7, while UoM will teach Module M8 on master's thesis preparation. All four universities will collaborate on Module M9, preparing students for Module M10, where industry research projects, co-designed with industry partners, will be implemented.
- In the fourth semester (S4, 30 ECTS), all partners will participate in supervising students' master's theses (M11) and industry projects (M10) as co-supervisors, based on their academic or geographical expertise.

### Assessment

The joint programme is based on a cooperation of four HEI which forms the adequate basis for offering the programme successfully. The processes and boards as well as the cooperation agreement secure an adequate joint delivery of the programme which was also jointly designed. However, while it is outlined the role of associated partners in the programme design, it is recommended to list their specific contributions to clarify how these partners have influenced in the structure, contents, and delivery of the joint programme. In particular, the panel considers that the role of the 16 associated university partners in the design and engagement during the implementation process needs further elaboration.

In the governance and coordination of the joint programme, it is important to clearly explain how the associated partners will participate in decision-making and management. Similarly, the roles, responsibilities, and ways in which the Student and Industry Boards will contribute should also be clearly defined.

The proposal includes support letters from the majority of associated partners to demonstrate the aim of the collaborative framework. Even though only two are pending,

it is recommended that the consortium obtain formal support letters from all associated partner institutions before the implementation of the joint programme.

The panel concludes that **the standard is compliant**.

### **Recommendations**

- Detail the contributions of associated partners in the joint programme design, implementation, and governance.
- The role of the Student and Industry Advisory Boards could be a bit more elaborated in the Governance structure.
- Provide full support letters from the associated partner institutions before the implementation of the joint programme.

### **1.3. Cooperation agreement**

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.

### **Evidence**

The MATTeRS Cooperation agreement (signed) covers thoroughly the items listed in the standard:

*a)* Denomination of the degree(s) awarded in the programme.

Joint Master on Tourism Transformations for Regenerative Futures (MATTeRS).

*b)* Coordination and responsibilities of the partners involved.

Article 3. The University of Girona is responsible for the overall management of the consortium, including financial, administrative, and legal coordination. This includes managing the MATTeRS program's activities, decision-making procedures, student registrations, program fees, and financial distributions among partners. The Program Director, based at UdG, oversees these activities, and prepares annual reports.

Each partner is responsible for delivering their portion of the academic program, assisting students with logistics (e.g., visas, registration, accommodation), and ensuring compliance with the cooperation agreement. Local coordinators at each partner institution will manage these activities and collaborate on program implementation. Partners must also keep the program director informed of any issues impacting the program and participate in the consortium's decision-making bodies.

Article 11. The MATTeRS consortium is managed by several bodies:

Governance structure:

- Consortium secretariat (CS): The executive body responsible for operational management. Most of the administrative tasks regarding the management of the consortium and the joint master's programme will be centralized in the CS, which will be hosted at the University of Girona, as coordinating institution.
- Academic Board (ACB): Is composed of one academic representative from each of the partner universities and focuses on academic decisions, quality assurance, student applications, and marketing.
- Administrative Board (ADB): Is composed of one administrative representative from each of the partner universities and manages administrative tasks like student recruitment, registration, and financial processes.
- Advisory Boards: Industry Advisory Board (IAB) and Student Advisory Board (SAB) provide feedback and recommendations.
- Consortium Assembly (CA): Composed of representatives from all boards and meets annually for reports and decision-making.

Local governance:

- Local Coordination Committees (LCC): Manage the program at each partner university, focusing on academic and administrative activities.
- Local Academic Committees (LAC): Handle academic content and quality assurance locally at each partner university.

The partnership between the MATTeRS consortium and associated universities offers several collaboration opportunities, including:

- Student and faculty exchanges for teaching, research, or industry projects.

- Co-supervision of students' master's theses and industry projects.
- Contributions to promoting the MATTeRS program and increasing the associated partner's international visibility.
- Advisory activities on request.

These associated partnerships do not entail any necessary obligations, neither for the consortium Partners nor for the associated university partner.

Regarding the associate industry partners, have various collaboration opportunities, including:

- Research and training internships for students at the partner organization.
- Classroom seminars and field trips led by industry representatives.
- Participation in the annual MATTeRS Industry Day, connecting students and industry partners.
- Promotion and increased visibility through MATTeRS's website, marketing materials, and professional networks.
- Advisory activities, available upon request and mutual agreement.

These collaborations are voluntary and not obligatory for either party. Any potential collaboration must be proposed, negotiated, and mutually agreed upon.

#### *c) Admission and selection procedures for students*

Article 7, article 8 and article 9 covers:

- admission requirements and application procedures;
- admission and registration (selection criteria and admission and registration procedures);
- recognition of qualifications;
- services for students, rights, and regulations;
- student agreement, to be signed by all enrolled students (to be prepared by the consortium), and the joint programme director of the degree program. This agreement will outline the rights and responsibilities of students regarding the academic component of the joint programme, as well as detailing any administrative requirements and available services.

#### *d) Mobility of students and teachers*

According to the Consortium agreement, the programme consists of two study years (120 ECTS). The first semester will be delivered at the University of Girona (S1, 30 ECTS) and the second semester will take place at the University of Oulu (S2, 30 ECTS).

In the third semester (S3, 30 ECTS), "The academic activities of the third semester S3 (30 ECTS, June - December) will start at Kenyatta University in Nairobi, where all

students will take a dedicated course on tourism transformations in the Global South (Kenyatta University); will get introduced to and prepare their academic research proposals for their master's thesis course (University of Mauritius); and will take the specialization focus course right before they start getting engaged in a related industry research project (all partners involved). In the second part of the semester (September - December) students will move to the location where their industry projects will be implemented under the supervision of appointed staff from any of the partners (all partners involved)."

The fourth semester (S4, 30 ECTS) "will be dedicated to the master's thesis research project, which will be supervised by dedicated supervisors from any of the partners, and eventually with the co-supervision of staff from one of the university associated partners."

This complies with the EMJM framework which states that programmes must include compulsory physical mobility for all students "consisting of a minimum of two study periods in two countries. Each of these mandatory study periods must correspond to a workload of at least one academic semester (30 ECTS credits or equivalent) and the two countries must be different from the country of residence of the student at enrolment stage".

However, although the SER envisions the mobility of the academic staff of the four university partners of the joint programme, physical and/or virtual, whenever their participation can clearly enhance the learning experience of students, this is not explicitly mentioned in the cooperation agreement.

e) Examination regulations, student assessment methods, recognition of credits and degree awarding procedures in the consortium.

Article 9 and 10. Student administration includes credit transfer, recognition issues and examination system; and degrees awarded to MATTeRS students.

## **Assessment**

The panel concludes that the terms and conditions of the program are clearly outlined in the Cooperation Agreement, apart from those related to the mobility of academic staff. The panel considers that provisions for the mobility of academic staff from the four university partners of the joint programme should be included. This includes both physical and virtual mobility, particularly when their participation can demonstrably enhance the students' learning experience.

As associated academic and industry partners collaborate with the program within a voluntary and not obligatory for either party framework and any potential collaboration between them must be proposed, negotiated, and mutually agreed upon, the panel recommends designing and implementing consistent assurance mechanisms from the coordinating bodies in order to guarantee equal opportunities beyond students and the continuity of the intended learning outcomes along the years.



The panel concludes that **the standard is compliant with conditions**.

### **Requirements**

- The cooperation agreement should include specific terms and conditions regarding the mobility of the academic staff from the four university partners of the joint programme.

### **Recommendations**

- Deploy coordination mechanisms in order to ensure that any variability on the voluntary participation of associated academic and industry partners does not affect the consistency of the program along the years.

## **2. LEARNING OUTCOMES**

### **2.1. Level**

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).

### **Evidence**

The SER provides evidence that the intended learning outcomes (ILO) of the MATTeRS program have been formulated to meet the QF-7 level of learning outcomes in the Framework for Qualifications in the European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA).

These requirements include demonstrate knowledge and understanding, applying knowledge in new or unfamiliar environments, integrating knowledge to handle complexity, communicating conclusions clearly, and possessing self-directed learning skills.

The focus of ILO of the joint programme is to equip students with advanced knowledge of tourism futures in both green growth and post-growth scenarios, inclusive and regenerative tourism transformations, the dynamics of sustainable tourism development, and environmental and cultural change. Students will also gain insights into the principles and governance of resilient and regenerative tourism management, tourism transformations in the Global South, and the design and implementation of transformative research projects. Additionally, the program prepares students with the skills and competencies to design and manage inclusive and regenerative tourism futures, lead necessary transitions, and make responsible decisions as practitioners in

tourism organizations, businesses, and destinations. Furthermore, students will be trained as researchers in the fields of human mobilities and regenerative management, grounded in the methodological and theoretical understandings of contemporary social science research, emphasizing cultural values, disciplines, and approaches. In that sense, the program's specific learning aligns with the QF-EHEA requirements.

The ILO also align with the national frameworks applicable to each partner university in the joint programme. By default, each national qualification framework (NFQ) within the EHEA aligns with the European Qualifications Framework and is compatible with the QF-EHEA. This includes the University of Girona and University of Oulu, but not Kenyatta University or the University of Mauritius. However, the SER provides evidence of alignment for each of the countries involved, as shown in Tables 2.5, 2.7 and 2.9, which illustrate the correspondence between the intended learning outcomes with those of their respective national NFQ.

Additionally, the SER includes Table 2.12 which clearly demonstrates the equivalences between the learning outcomes of the QF-EHEA and those of the four NFQ.

## Assessment

The intended learning outcomes (ILO) specified for the study programme align with the requirements for level 7 of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and the Framework for Qualifications in the European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA), as well as with the applicable national qualification frameworks of the partner universities in Spain, Finland, Kenya, and Mauritius. The formulation of the ILO meets the expectations of the relevant qualification levels in these frameworks. To demonstrate this, a matrix has been included in the documentation, showing the alignment of the ILO with the QF-EHEA and four national qualification frameworks.

The panel concludes that **the standard is compliant**.

## 2.2. Disciplinary fields

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

## Evidence

The SER elaborates that the curriculum is built on two key goals, which form an essential part of the curriculum. The focus is on two of the most prominent and dominant paths to more inclusive futures, involving respectively green growth transitions and post-de-growth transformations.

The intended learning outcomes (ILO) of the programme include knowledge, skills, and competences in Tourism, understood as a social field of study related to economics, sociology, psychology, geography, and anthropology.

The ILO related to knowledge (LO1-LO2), appropriately emphasize developing a critical awareness of current issues and challenges in the field, exploring novel theoretical accounts in tourism studies, and examining tourism practices, policies, technologies, spaces, and behaviours, as well as their socio-economic and environmental impacts on multiple stakeholders and planetary wellbeing.

The ILO related to skills (LO3-LO8), they focus on the ability to identify, describe and explain how current and future tourism spaces, behaviours and policies may contribute towards inclusive and regenerative tourism transformations; the ability to apply that knowledge into practice and contribute to the implementation of regenerative transitions; the ability to abandon conceptual modelizations that simplify complexity and embrace modelizations and conceptualizations that respect the complex dynamics of tourism and tourism transformations and contribute to more regenerative transformations; the ability to problematize underlying values, assumptions and power structures of contemporary tourism, on which systemic (in)justices and the perpetuation of these are grounded; the ability to identify the obstacles for regenerative transformation and evaluate and analyze how they may affect the prospects of more inclusive tourism futures; and the ability to use these complex modelizations, this problematic thinking and this creative thought in order to make critical assessments and informed judgements of the impacts of different kinds of tourism practices and policies, and their potential value for tourism transformations and regenerative futures.

Last, as for the ILO related to competences (LO9-LO13), they include the creative capacity to effectively design regenerative tourism futures and the corresponding transition paths; the capacity to devise organizational, relational, and managerial interventions and governance processes which may effectively contribute to the creation of regenerative tourism spaces, to the transformation of tourism behaviours and to planetary well-being, socio-ecological resilience and more inclusive futures; the capacity to participate collaboratively and responsibly in all kinds of teamwork, contributing to the effective development of the teams and the implementation of team projects leading to the implementation of transition paths toward tourism regenerative futures; the capacity to envision socio-ecological injustices and to affirmatively deploy ethical thinking in practicing tourism, tourism management and tourism development; and the capacity to communicate and share knowledge effectively, in speech and writing, to a diversity of audiences.

## **Assessment**

The MATTeRS programme consists of a suitable mix of theoretical knowledge, and innovative competences. Students will be equipped with core skills derived either from academic or practical related industry challenges. Even though they appear to be meaningful and pertinent, the SER does not explicitly justify how core skills and specific

defined skills for professional levels were defined and nor how actual tourism industry and public management needs have been identified as a guiding driver of the master's programme design. Specific for this programme is the development of profound knowledge and well-defined core skills on how to deal with transformations and regeneration in the tourism activity in both green growth and post-growth scenarios that should be operationalized accordingly to reported tourism and travel industries and destinations challenges, to actual employability needs or requirements.

The panel concludes that **the standard is compliant**.

### **Recommendations**

- Collaborate with industry partners to gather specific tourism sector needs, analyse tourism trends and future projections in post de-growth transformative scenarios, include requirements, challenges and needs from professional current and future employers to validate the programme's content and its applicability.

## **2.3. Achievement**

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

### **Evidence**

The structure and content of each course is designed to meet defined learning goals that match the intended learning outcomes (ILO) of the overall programme.

The SER explains that the ILO are achieved through their effective distribution across the courses of the programme (table 2.16). Each course includes outcomes corresponding to the three categories: knowledge, skills and competences with every ILO appearing at least once in each of the four semesters. The number of ILO per course ranges between 4 and 9, except for the industry research project in the third semester and the master's thesis in the fourth semester, which, as capstone courses that they are, address all thirteen ILO of the programme.

In addition, the achievement of the ILO depends on the alignment between the design of teaching, learning activities and assessment frameworks. The ILO will be assessed and demonstrated by the students throughout the programme using a combination of learning and assessment methodologies. Dedicated guidelines have been developed and will be provided to instructors. These guidelines will outline valid, reliable, and transparent procedures for assessing the ILO (annex 15).

## Assessment

Based on the documentation submitted to the panel, considering that this evaluation is an *ex-ante* evaluation with no available evidence of actual results, the panel concludes that the intended learning outcomes of the programme are likely to be achieved. This conclusion is based on the programme's design, which aligns learning activities, teaching methodologies, and assessment frameworks with the intended learning outcomes. However, the panel emphasizes the importance of continuous monitoring to ensure that the expected outcomes are effectively achieved once the programme is implemented.

The panel concludes that **the standard is compliant**.

## 3. STUDY PROGRAMME

### 3.1. Curriculum

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

### Evidence

The MATTeRS programme consists of a four-module (Fundamental courses, Specialization courses, Intensification program, master's thesis) two-year programme (120 ECTS):

- The first academic year will be jointly delivered at the UdG (S1, 30 ECTS; 1 module course x 6 ECTS + 2 module courses x 12 ECTS) and at the OU (S2, 30 ECTS, 2 module courses x 10 ECTS).
- In the third semester (S3, 30 ECTS), KU will host students in Nairobi for Module M7, while UoM will teach Module M8 on master's thesis preparation. All four universities will collaborate on Module M9, preparing students for Module M10, where industry research projects, co-designed with industry partners, will be implemented.
- In the fourth semester (S4, 30 ECTS), all partners will participate in supervising students' master's theses (M11) and industry projects (M10) as co-supervisors, based on their academic or geographical expertise.

MATTeRS study programme design (figure 1, Cooperation Agreement):

## COURSES, CREDITS AND UNIVERSITIES IN CHARGE OF THEIR TUITION

### 1. INCLUSIVE TOURISM FUTURES

M1 - Co-designing regenerative futures with living systems thinking	6	UNIVERSITY OF GIRONA
M2 - Tourism futures in green growth and post-growth economies	12	UNIVERSITY OF GIRONA
M3 - Towards inclusive and transformative tourism futures	12	UNIVERSITY OF GIRONA

### 2. REGENERATIVE TOURISM TRANSFORMATIONS

M4 - Sustainable tourism dynamics in environmental and cultural change	10	UNIVERSITY OF OULU
M5 - Resilience in regenerative tourism futures	10	UNIVERSITY OF OULU
M6 - Research methodologies for transformative futures	10	UNIVERSITY OF OULU

### 3. THE TRANSFORMATIVE POTENTIAL OF TOURISM

M7 - Tourism transformations and (post)development in the Global South	6	KENYATTA UNIVERSITY
M8 - Designing research projects: master thesis project proposal	6	UNIVERSITY OF MAURITIUS
M9 - Co-designing transformative and inclusive tourism futures	6	Any of the partner universities
M10 - Industry research project	12	Any of the partner universities

### 4. RESEARCHING & DESIGNING INCLUSIVE & REGENERATIVE TOURISM TRANSFORMATIONS

M11 - Master thesis	30	Any of the partner universities
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## Assessment

The structure of the MATTeRS programme consists of four sequential modules, each of them covering a full semester. In the first two semesters, students are introduced to a broad conceptual framework with which they will get involved in contemporary debates and practices of tourism development and transformations intended to contribute to sustainable and regenerative futures. This conceptual framework is divided into individual courses or modules, where students will be able to get acquainted with the relevant knowledge, as well as to put it into practice in course projects through which they will develop the intended skills and competences.

In the third and fourth semester, students will continue to develop and achieve the full array of learning outcomes through their direct involvement in different and varied field projects for which the learning outcomes achieved in the first two semesters will be required. The courses in these two last semesters will provide students direct exposure to tourism transformations in the Global South, immersive participation in a real industry project around the globe, and experience in the leadership of an academic research project under the supervision of expert academic staff of the programme.

The curriculum is structured according to the study programme objectives, presenting a two-year program divided into four semesters. This design creates a well-defined training path that simulates the complete innovation journey, ensuring students acquire the necessary knowledge and progress towards achieving the intended learning outcomes.

However, since each university specialize in specific topics within the joint programme, the definition of coordination mechanisms to ensure the adequacy of the intended learning outcomes acquisition and the coherence between the subjects delivered by each participating university could be further elaborated. This is particularly important

during the second year of the programme, which is mostly focused on learning through project design and development.

Additionally, the participation of associated partners appears to depend on the preferences and specific needs of the students in relation to their project goals. Based on the documentation provided, there does not appear to be a systematic process of definition of collaborative arrangements with these partners nor is there an operational procedure for their development.

The panel concludes that **the standard is compliant**.

### Recommendations

- To ensure coherence and adequacy of intended learning outcomes across the joint programme, it is recommended to further define coordination mechanisms between participating universities and establish a systematic process for developing collaborative arrangements with associated partners.

### 3.2. Credits

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

### Evidence

The MATTeRS master's programme is structured to align with the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS), which is a standard across the EHEA for ensuring academic quality and comparability of study periods abroad. The four partner universities have agreed to use the ECTS system and have established equivalences between workload units in the ECTS system and those in the Kenyan (KCATs) and Mauritanian systems (UoMs). It is noteworthy that, since 2022, the University of Mauritius has adopted a new Learner-Centred Credit System (LCCS), which is equivalent to the ECTS.

The learning activities of the MATTeRS Joint Master Programme are structured as individual courses and distributed over the two years required to complete the programme. These activities will demand a total student workload equivalent to 120 ECTS credit units, evenly distributed across the four semesters, with each semester comprising 30 ECTS credits. Therefore, the total number of ECTS credits for the MATTeRS Joint Master Programme falls within the recommended range of 90 to 120 credits for joint master's programmes.

For ECTS Distribution and clarity: See figure in [section 3.1](#).

## Assessment

The MATTeRS programme's application of the ECTS is proper, with a clear distribution of credits that align with the standard requirements for a European master's program. The structure of the curriculum, with defined credit allocations for each module and the master's thesis, supports a coherent educational progression aimed at achieving the intended learning outcomes. The detailed documentation provided further affirms the program's commitment to transparency and adherence to ECTS standards.

The panel considers that the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) is applied properly, and the distribution of credits is clear.

The panel concludes that **the standard is compliant**.

### 3.3. Workload

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.

## Evidence

The MATTeRS master's programme aligns with ECTS-based workload standards to meet the regulatory requirements for awarding master's degrees across participating countries. In Spain, the required workload ranges from 60 to 120 ECTS; in Finland, 120 ECTS; in Kenya, 240 KCATs (equivalent to 120 ECTS); and at the University of Mauritius, a minimum of 36 UoM credits (equivalent to 72 ECTS) is required, with flexibility for higher credits in joint international programmes.

The workload per credit varies across the four universities involved in the MATTeRS programme:

- The UdG adheres to the regulations outlined in Royal Decree 1125/2003 of September 5, 2003, which establishes the European credit and grading system for official university degrees in Spain. According to this decree, each credit corresponds to a workload of 25 to 30 hours. Typically, an academic year is valued at 60 ECTS credits.
- At UO, 1 ECTS equals 27 hours, resulting in a yearly workload of 1,600 hours.
- In Kenya, 1 KCAT represents 10 hours, with 120 KCATs per academic year, and in practice, 2 KCATs are equivalent to 1 ECTS resulting in 60 ECTS per academic year.
- The UoM adopted the Learning-Centred Credit System (LCCS) in 2022, aligning with ECTS and have set 30 hours per LCCS credit unit.



As the workload/hour ratio differs between the participating universities, the total workload ranges from 750 to 900 hours per semester, including the master's thesis. This workload comprises contact hours (15-20 hours per week), independent study, mandatory work placements, preparation for assessments and the time required to complete assessments.

As mentioned in previous sections, MATTeRS is a two-year master's programme of 120 ECTS divided into 4 terms of 30 ECTS each. Each semester course is assigned a specific number of ECTS, ranging from 6 to 30, with the master's thesis accounting for 30 ECTS (a full semester of work). The programme includes three courses worth 6 ECTS, three courses worth 10 ECTS, three courses worth 12 ECTS, and the master's thesis.

The theoretical content is delivered primarily during the first two semesters. The third semester focuses on developing students' project development skills combined with some practice around industry challenges. During the fourth semester, students will be taking the mandatory master's thesis.

### **Assessment**

Although there is no unified workload estimation across the participating universities, the current parameters appear appropriate and balanced across both years and semesters. However, it is recommended to clearly indicate the workload per semester according to the existing ratios of each participant university.

The panel highlights the importance of evenly distributing the workload across the 120 ECTS of the master's programme, especially considering that the program is taught in different locations. To ensure a proper relation of workload and ECTS assigned per course, it is recommended to conduct a student survey at the end of each term to gather feedback on the number of hours required for class preparation and exam study.

Additionally, it is recommended that the Consortium Academic Board closely monitor this issue to ensure equitable workload distribution.

The panel concludes that **the standard is compliant**.

### **Recommendations**

- Inform prospective and actual students about the actual workload per ECTS in each university.
- Conduct a student survey at the end of each term per course to ensure equitable distribution of workload among the four universities, monitored closely by the Consortium Academic Board.

## 4. ADMISSION AND RECOGNITION

### 4.1. Admission

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

#### Evidence

For students' admission and selection, general guidelines have been set (SER section 4.1): "A common selection procedure has also been agreed, which will be implemented by the selection committee, composed of representatives of all the four partners of the consortium. More specifically, the members of the Academic Board (ACB) and the members of the Administrative Board (ADB) will represent the partner universities in this committee. The selection procedure includes a list of well-specified selection criteria grounded on the assessment of applicants, the steps needed to complete the selection of admitted students, and the procedure for appeals for candidates to use it when appropriate."

The entry requirements are defined as outlined below:

1. **Academic profile:** Candidates must hold a higher education bachelor's degree, which must be equivalent of at least 3 years (180 ECTS) and must have taken foundation courses in at least three of the following disciplinary areas: sustainability, tourism, geography, sociology, anthropology, economics, business administration, marketing, culture and heritage, ethics, environmental management, communication, philosophy, quantitative research methods, and qualitative research methods.
2. **Grade point average:** Minimum grade point average in the bachelor's degree equivalent to 50%.
3. **English language competence:** The minimum level requirement for non-native English speakers is C1 or equivalent.

As part of the application submission process, students are required to provide various documents, including an application form, a copy of their bachelor's degree certificate, a copy of the degree's transcript of records, a proof of English competence, ID documentation, a candidate's CV, a letter of motivation and two letters of recommendation. All the documentation must be submitted in English. The entire process is completed through the joint master programme's website, where all necessary information, including documentation requirements and submission deadlines, will be clearly outlined.

The selection process involves a multi-faceted evaluation of candidate's prior exposure to core knowledge, academic records, motivation to enrol de programme, and overall

competences. The final score for each applicant is based on the criteria and weights specified in the table below:

Entry requirements and minimum eligibility criteria (table 4.3, page 73, SER)

Criteria for assessment of candidates	Information source to calculate the score	Weight given to each criteria
Prior exposure to core knowledge	List of courses taken in prior degrees	20%
Average grade of the bachelor's degree	Transcript of records of the degree	35%
Motivation to enrol the programme	Letter of motivation	25%
Capacities of the candidate	Letter of motivation, CV, and letters of recommendation	20%

## Assessment

The entry requirements, minimum eligibility criteria, and applicable legislation for master's degree programs in the countries of the four partner universities are clearly defined. The appeals procedure is a key component, ensuring that applicants' rights are protected and that the process aligns with transparency and equality policies, focusing on the adequacy, suitability, and clarity of admission criteria.

A joint admission policy governs all stages of the process, incorporating a unified selection procedure and the establishment of a joint selection committee. This committee operates with harmonized selection procedures and a shared recruitment policy, ensuring full compliance with relevant legal regulations across all partner institutions.

The panel concludes that **the standard is compliant**.

## 4.2. Recognition

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.

## Evidence

Following the Lisbon Recognition Convention, the partners automatically recognize qualifications and periods of studies developed for the MATTERS master's courses at each of the partner universities as outlined in the SER (page 75).

Admitted candidates that request an exemption from one of the modules in the program at the time of enrollment, based on prior learning, the procedure involves submitting a request to the consortium secretariat and providing certificates that demonstrate the student has already completed a course with equivalent learning outcomes to those of the corresponding module in the MATTeRS' programme.

The grades for each course will be recognised by the four partner institutions via a grade's conversion table (table 5.5, page 107 SER).

The assessment will take place following the procedures established at the university where the corresponding course is to be taken.

Following the Lisbon Recognition Convention, the partners automatically recognise qualifications and periods of studies developed for the MATTeRS master's courses at each of the partner universities.

Regarding the recognition of the MATTeRS' master's degree in each of the four consortium countries, it will be automatic. Graduates will receive a joint master's degree certificate and a diploma supplement (annex 12, SER), meaning the MATTeRS' programme will be accredited in all four respective countries by the appropriate agencies and in compliance with national laws. Specifically, in Spain and Finland, the program will be accredited through the European Approach to Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes, while in Kenya and Mauritius, accreditation will be granted by the respective national accreditation bodies.

### **Assessment**

Regulations to facilitate recognition of the modules and credits awarded in the partner institutions and the acknowledgement of prior learning are appropriately documented in accordance with the Lisbon Convention.

The panel concludes that **the standard is compliant**.

### **Recommendations**

- Clearly specify the opportunities available for the recognition of prior learning, previous qualifications, and periods of study and ensure that this information will be easily accessible in the programme's website.

## 5. LEARNING, TEACHING AND ASSESSMENT

### 5.1. Learning and teaching

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.

#### Evidence

The programme is designed considering the alignment between the intended learning outcomes, learning and teaching activities and assessment procedures.

According to the SER, the programme embraces innovative active learning and teaching approaches that require student interaction. Four different types of approach will be implemented in the programme, including problem-based learning (PBL), collaborative learning (CL), experiential learning (EL), and flipped learning (FL).

The curriculum integrates a balanced blend of theoretical content, experiential learning, and project-based activities. The teaching activities are student-centred, focusing on active learning, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills. Faculty members from each partner institution contribute their unique expertise, enriching the interdisciplinary nature of the programme.

The diverse cultural backgrounds of the MATTeRS' students are carefully considered to ensure the effectiveness of the programme's teaching and learning approaches. To create a welcoming and inclusive learning environment, the programme adopts teaching practices based on the principles of inclusive pedagogies. These include project-based and experiential learning, research projects, class discussions, student inquiry to drive learning, reflective writing, cooperative learning and team projects, and student presentations. Also, an intersectional gender perspective is present in the intended learning outcomes.

A key module of the programme is the industry research project and work placements, which are primarily conducted in collaboration with industry partners. At the end of the first semester, the course leader collects information on students' specialization interests and collaborates with industry partners to design research projects and placements that align with both the students' learning goals and the partners' needs.

The master's thesis is the main output of the whole teaching learning process. This thesis is oriented to perform scholarly research, as well as to discuss implications for industry players, policymakers and/or relevant communities leading to a more sustainable and regenerative tourism future.

The course syllabi tables provided in Annex 5 include detailed information on the teaching staff, learning aims, intended learning outcomes, course content, teaching and learning activities with corresponding workload, and assessment activities for each course.

## **Assessment**

The programme has been designed considering the alignment between the intended learning outcomes, learning and teaching activities and the assessment procedures.

It also recognizes the diverse cultural backgrounds, disciplines, and academic traditions of its students. Furthermore, the programme integrates a gender perspective and provides support for students with special needs, fostering an inclusive and equitable learning environment.

To clarify certain aspects of the programme, the panel considers that it may be helpful specify the criteria and processes for assigning students to work placements and industry research projects in course M10. This could include a detailed explanation of the role of industry partners in providing these placements, as well as their responsibilities in supervising the projects. Additionally, it would be recommended to define the connection between industry partners and the preparatory course M09 should be clarified, particularly in terms of how the outcomes of the industry project will be delivered.

For course M07, it is suggested to outline the requirements and guidelines for selecting master's thesis topics and appointing suitable supervisors. Similarly, the course description for M11 (master's thesis) could provide a more comprehensive explanation of the procedures and criteria used to assign supervisors, ensuring alignment with the intended learning objectives, and facilitating successful thesis completion.

The panel concludes that **the standard is compliant**.

## **Recommendations**

- Clarify criteria and processes for work placements and industry research projects (M10).
- Outline connections between preparatory courses (M09) and industry involvement.
- Detail requirements for preparatory courses (M07) to guide thesis topic selection and supervisor appointments.
- Provide detailed procedures and criteria for appointing supervisors in M11.

## 5.2. Assessment of students

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.

### Evidence

The SER outlines that the assessment of students has been agreed to be consistently applied across all the participating partner universities and focuses on how the achieved learning outcomes of each student in each course are constructively aligned with the intended learning outcomes.

Additionally, the SER describes that efforts have been made to create a joint examination regulation. This regulation focuses on aligning the assessment methods with the intended learning outcomes and the learning and teaching activities. It also integrates the assessment procedures across all partner institutions using common grading practices, grades translation grids, and grade recognition.

The regulation also includes provisions for the modification of exams for students with special needs and outlines a common framework for re-takes, misconducts, and appeals.

The grading grids to evaluate the learning objectives (Annex 15) and M11 master's thesis is provided. Both the examination regulations and grading criteria should be published with the syllabus of the courses. This is essential to ensure that students understand how their performance will be evaluated, promoting transparency, fairness, and equality to the assessment.

The evaluation of the M10 Industry Research Project and M11 master's thesis is carried out by a panel consisting of the supervisor and one external member, with a third member added, if necessary, in the case of a dispute. During the visit, it was explained that previous projects involved a three-member panel, but this approach was deemed to provide no significant added value, resulting in the current two-member panel structure.

A MATTeRS student who successfully earns 120 ECTS within the Joint Degree Program will automatically be awarded the joint degree by the Universitat de Girona on behalf of the Degree Awarding Parties.

### Assessment

The MATTeRS program has put in place an assessment system that is comprehensive and varied, and directly correlates with the intended learning outcomes of the programme.

The SER describes that both the M10 Industry Research Project and M11 master's Thesis are evaluated by a panel consisting of the supervisor and one external member, with a

third member added if necessary. To enhance the objectivity of the assessment, it is recommended to assign greater weight to the external evaluator's contribution.

Overall, the panel considers based on the information provided and the conversations during the online visit that the examination regulations and the assessment of the achieved learning outcomes correspond with the intended learning outcomes and there are rules to be applied consistently across all partner institutions. Either way, it would be helpful to create a dedicated Examination Board to monitor the quality of the joint programme and the achievement of the intended learning outcomes.

The panel concludes that **the standard is compliant**.

### **Recommendations**

- Create a dedicated Examination Board within the Academic Board.
- Elaborate a comprehensive guide for the master's thesis process (proposal approval, elaboration, assessment).
- Publish a clear grading system for the master's thesis evaluation.
- A three-member panel, including the supervisor and two external members, is suggested for the evaluation of modules M10 and M11.



## 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.

### Evidence

The SER describes the services that will be needed for students and provided from the Consortium, in accordance with the Erasmus+ Programme guidelines.

Prior to their arrival to the UdG for the first semester and at the other universities for the other subsequent two semesters, students in the MATTeRS programme will have access to two main categories of services: academic services, which support learning and the achievement of students' learning outcomes, and personal support services, which facilitate students' mobilities, accommodation and socio-cultural integration in the cities where the courses are delivered throughout the programme.

Regarding the academic services, new students will get access to an academic induction handbook, outlining the programme structure, mobility details, course syllabi, main academic references regarding course content, and academic staff of the programme. Admitted students will also receive personalized advice on any necessary foundation knowledge and preparatory activities.

Additionally, the programme provides comprehensive support for students' relocation, including a mobility handbook with information on living costs, transportation, visas, accommodation, health services, and banking. Local student support hubs and "buddies" (local students paired with MATTeRS' students) assist with settling in and securing accommodation before arrival.

A central students' support service hub will be established at the consortium secretariat, with local support hubs at each partner university managed by the respective administrative members of the consortium board. These local hubs will guide students during their time at each participating higher education institution.

Upon arrival at each university, students will have access to various support services, including library services, career development, accommodation, counseling, sports, language services, and student union services. These services will help students overcome the challenges of studying at three of the four partner universities and contribute to achieving the learning outcomes.

The report outlines that they also offer services that support personal life such as sports services, student union, and language services. All universities have counselling services to support the health and wellbeing of the student.

The fact that all students will stay at least at three of four partner universities addresses the need of students support for this program. The four partner institutes are aware of the challenge the required mobility presents to the students.

### **Assessment**

The MATTeRS' programme appears to have a comprehensive support system for students, specifically designed to help them achieve the intended learning outcomes, particularly given the unique challenges faced by mobile students in a foreign environment. Nevertheless, it would be advisable to strengthen the coordination of support services across all partner institutions to ensure that the students have equitable access to resources, regardless of their study location.

Since students will be relocating during the programme, effective management of accommodation and administrative tasks is crucial. Mobility issues may arise if students engage in a project at any of the associated partner universities.

Services are clearly identified, and functions are well-defined, without overlapping. This allows students to know whom to approach in case of any doubts or questions.

The panel considers that support services will contribute to the achievement of the learning outcomes. The fact that all students will have to stay at least at three partner universities addresses the challenge of mobility and the support to be provided by the four partners.

The panel concludes that **the standard is compliant**.

### **Recommendations**

- Since the delays in obtaining visa by embassies and finding appropriate student housing are common issues to all EMJMs, a common policy for students obtaining visas (when needed) and finding accommodation is recommended.
- Consider developing a unified student support handbook that outlines all available services and how to access them across the consortium.
- Provide clear information on personal support services for students' mobility during the fourth semester, ensuring effective management of relocation and project engagement at partner universities.
- Building on the alumni network after finishing the studies.

## 7. RESOURCES

### 7.1. Staff

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

#### Evidence

The SER provides a profile of the professors involved, detailing their specialized knowledge and professional experience (Annex 10), as well as the content they will teach (Annex 5). It effectively demonstrates that the programme incorporates the expertise of academic staff from the four partner universities, covering a wide range of academic specializations that are aligned with the programme's inter- and trans-disciplinary approach.

The proposal includes 23 academics (11 UdG, 6 UO, 4 KU, and 2 UoM). Lecturers at all four partner institutions have the relevant academic qualifications, external recognitions, and suitable experience to provide quality training. According to the evidence (Annex 10), they are also actively involved in research projects and have made research contributions within the field of the programme.

Regarding the administrative staff, the programme foresees one finance officer and one administrative manager (UdG).

#### Assessment

The panel considers that the staff partially complies with the requirements regarding number, qualifications, professional expertise, and international experience necessary to effectively implement the study programme.

It is noted that while the number of academics at UdG, OU and KO appear adequate for the assigned credits, UoM has a proportionally lower number of staff involved. Currently, UoM has only two professors contributing to the programme, which limits the partner's overall contribution and affects aspects such as the number of students who can be admitted to the master's thesis. Increasing the number of associate professors at UoM would enhance the academic capacity and expertise available to students, ensuring a more comprehensive learning experience within the programme.

Regarding UdG, OU and KU, while the number of lecturers is sufficient, there is a higher proportion of assistant professors and post-doc researchers is too high compared to senior or permanent professors (e.g. professors and associate professors). Some of these research assistants have less than two years of experience in teaching, or in some cases, no experience at all. During the online visit, it was explained that most of the courses have a combination of experienced teachers and post-doc teachers.

The panel concludes that **the standard is compliant with conditions**.

## Requirements

- UoM should increase the number of academic staff involved in the programme to ensure a balanced contribution and mitigate potential risks associated with the low number of lecturers available.
- Specify the participation of professors from associated partner universities in courses M9, M10, and M11, including details on the duration, topics, and types of teaching activities (online or in person).

## Recommendations

- Provide a clearer explanation of the simultaneous participation of experienced teachers and post-doc teachers in each module.

## 7.2. Facilities

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

## Evidence

The SER outlines the facilities available for the course and provides links to relevant information on the universities' official websites for further reference. Since only master's thesis supervision takes place on the UoM campus, detailed facility information for this location is not applicable.

All four partner universities offer different kinds of classroom facilities needed to deliver the programme effectively.

Regarding the external spaces and specialised infrastructure for fieldwork and industry research projects, the SER outlines the establishment of a dedicated network of industry associated partners. These partners will be intensively involved in learning activities particularly those related to industry research projects and internships (modules M9 and M10) within the programme. A list of the associated partners is provided, with the assumption they have the necessary infrastructure for the development of the activities of the MATTeRS programme by students.

All four partner universities provide learning resources platforms and libraries that adequately support most of the MATTeRS programme's requirements. Additionally, two industry partners—Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) and Digital Tourism Think Tank

(DTTT)—offer access to their specialized libraries, which will be available to both teachers and students of the programme.

Hyperlinks to detailed information on these resources, both from the partner universities and the industry partners, are provided and deemed sufficient to support the teaching and learning activities of the MATTeRS programme.

About learning management systems (LMSs) or virtual learning environments (VLEs), each of the four partner universities utilizes its own platform. The primary LMSs at UdG and OU serve as the core environments where most conventional taught courses are delivered, while KU and UoM operate proprietary digital learning platforms tailored to their institutional needs.

In addition to these systems, the Consortium will implement Notion as a unified online platform. This platform will facilitate organization, storage, and sharing of all relevant documents and information for the entire MATTeRS community, including teachers, administrators, and students. The LMSs and platforms, with links provided in the SER, are deemed suitable for achieving the programme's objectives.

Lastly, all partner universities offer facilities designed in accordance with universal design principles, ensuring accessibility for individuals of diverse abilities, ages, reading levels, learning styles, languages, and cultural backgrounds. Likewise, the associated industry partners within the network provide a variety of universally designed spaces, effectively meeting the needs of a diverse student cohort.

### **Assessment**

The facilities provided by the MATTeRS programme are well-aligned with the requirements of the curriculum and are conducive to the achievement of its intended learning outcomes.

The adequacy of these facilities, especially when combined with the programme's academic resources and support services, indicates that the programme is well-equipped to deliver a comprehensive educational experience that enables students to succeed in the field of tourism.

The panel considers the facilities both sufficient and appropriate to meet the needs of the programme.

The panel concludes that **the standard is compliant**.

## **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.

## Evidence

According to the SER, the MATTeRS consortium will publish information about the programme's activities in a clear, accurate, objective, up-to-date, and easily accessible manner to meet the informational needs of prospective and current students, graduates, other stakeholders, and the public.

Given the anticipated international and diverse composition of students and stakeholders, the information will be published in English, which is also the programme's language of instruction. Additionally, individual university partners will publish this information in their respective national languages if required by local regulations.

Table 8.1 of the SER describes the documentation and information that will be made available through various platforms: the individual websites of the university partners, the consortium integrated website the intranet platform (Notion).

Information about the programme—including admission requirements and procedures, selection criteria, course catalogue, intended learning outcomes, awarded qualifications, learning, teaching, and assessment methods, pass rates, further learning opportunities, and graduate employment data—will be published by both the programme and each partner university.

The programme's official website will be created and launched as soon as the programme receives accreditation. This website will serve as the primary platform for publishing all relevant documents and information generated by the programme.

## Assessment

Table 8.2 in the SER outlines the contents to be published. However, the panel suggest that a description of the structure and content of the programme's website, as well as the educational guides to be included in future documentation. This will provide a clearer overview of how information will be organized and presented, ensuring transparency and ease of access for all stakeholders.

The panel concludes that once the website is launched, relevant information about the programme will be well-documented and readily accessible.

The panel concludes that **the standard is compliant**.

## Recommendations

- Include a description of the structure and content of the programme's website and educational guides in future documentation.

## 9. QUALITY ASSURANCE

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

### Evidence

According to the self-assessment report, each partner institution within the consortium already has its own internal quality assurance systems (IQAS) in place. To avoid duplicating efforts, the integrated IQAS mechanisms of the MATTeRS joint programme will build upon these existing systems at each partner university. Hyperlinks to the IQAS of the four partners, as well as the relevant national agencies for higher education quality, are provided.

The participating institutions recognize the value of each other's quality assurance (QA) measures. At the same time, the internal QA strategy of the joint programme will seek to enhance the existing structures within each partner institution, while introducing new mechanisms to ensure the cohesion of the system and facilitate joint evaluation and decision-making for continuous improvement. The implementation of this joint IQAS will be carried out in consultation and close collaboration with the Administrative Board of the consortium and the respective QA units at each university.

The joint QA policy is outlined in the consortium agreement, which also details key aspects of the IQAS for the programme. The partners have agreed on the programme's strategic aims and objectives and are committed to meeting all applicable quality standards, as defined in the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) for the European Approach to Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes. In addition to meeting these standards, the joint IQAS will respect the principles and guidelines of each partner's institutional standards and national laws.

Regarding accreditation in the African countries of the other two universities—Kenya and Mauritius—these non-EU countries do not directly recognize accreditations through the European Approach. Therefore, once the programme is accredited through the European Approach, both Kenyatta University and the University of Mauritius will immediately seek accreditation for the joint programme in their respective countries through the relevant national agencies, in compliance with their national laws.

The quality standards outlined in the joint IQAS, the key performance indicators for dynamic internal quality assurance, and the activities required for system implementation are appropriate. The SER reasonably explains how quality assurance, through quality control and continuous improvement, will be ensured in the joint programme.

## Assessment

The Consortium has designed an integrated joint IQAS, building on the individual QA systems already in place at each partner institution. These systems are routinely reviewed by external quality assurance agencies in their respective countries. Either way, it would be helpful to create a dedicated Quality Assurance Board to monitor the quality of the joint programme and the quality of the programme.

The SER outlines the internal quality assurance mechanisms and evaluation processes that will be implemented by the MATTeRS joint programme. This includes adherence to the 10 ESG quality standards, the selection of four key performance indicators (stakeholder satisfaction, labour market transition, alignment with evolving societal challenges, and student performance), and the identification of the actors involved in the internal quality assurance system.

The panel concludes that **the standard is compliant**.

## Recommendations

- A dedicated Quality Assurance Board, comprising representatives from the various bodies involved in the system is advised.



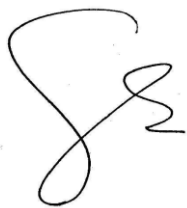
# DECISION

## Summary of the assessment

STANDARD	ASSESSMENT
ELIGIBILITY	<b>Compliant</b>
- <i>Status</i>	Compliant
- <i>Joint design and delivery</i>	Compliant
- <i>Cooperation agreement</i>	Compliant with conditions
- <i>Extension credit load</i>	Compliant
LEARNING OUTCOMES	<b>Compliant</b>
- <i>Level</i>	Compliant
- <i>Disciplinary fields</i>	Compliant
- <i>Achievement</i>	Compliant
- <i>Regulated professions</i>	Compliant
STUDY PROGRAMME	<b>Compliant</b>
- <i>Curriculum</i>	Compliant
- <i>Credits</i>	Compliant
- <i>Workload</i>	Compliant
ADMISSION AND RECOGNITION	<b>Compliant</b>
- <i>Admission</i>	Compliant
- <i>Recognition</i>	Compliant
LEARNING, TEACHING AND ASSESSMENT	<b>Compliant</b>
- <i>Learning and teaching</i>	Compliant
- <i>Assessment of students</i>	Compliant
STUDENT SUPPORT	<b>Compliant</b>
RESOURCES	<b>Compliant with conditions</b>
- <i>Staff</i>	Compliant with conditions
- <i>Facilities</i>	Compliant
TRANSPARENCY AND DOCUMENTATION	<b>Compliant</b>
QUALITY ASSURANCE	<b>Compliant</b>
<b>FINAL RESULT PROPOSAL</b>	<b>ACCREDITED</b>

This External assessment committee recommends to the Institutional and Programme Review Commission of AQU Catalunya the favourable ex-ante accreditation of the programme evaluated with the level of “**Compliant**”.

The Chair of the external evaluation committee states that this document constitutes the assessment report.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'S' followed by a smaller, more complex scribble.

**Salvador Antón Clavé**  
**Tarragona, 30/01/2025**

## Summary of requirements

### 1. Eligibility

- > The Cooperation Agreement should include specific terms and conditions regarding the mobility of the academic staff from the four university partners of the joint programme.

### 7. Resources

- > The University of Mauritius (UoM) should increase the number of academic staff involved in the programme to ensure a balanced contribution and mitigate potential risks associated with the low number of lecturers available.
- > Specify the participation of professors from associated partner universities in courses M9, M10, and M11, including details on the duration, topics, and types of teaching activities.

## Summary of recommendations

### 1. Eligibility

- > Detail the contributions of associated partners in the joint programme design, implementation, and governance.
- > The role of the Student and Industry Advisory Boards could be a bit more elaborated in the Governance structure.
- > Provide full support letters from the associated partner institutions before the implementation of the joint programme.
- > Deploy coordination mechanisms in order to ensure that any variability on the voluntary participation of associated academic and industry partners does not affect the consistency of the program along the years.

### 2. Learning outcomes

- > Collaborate with industry partners to gather specific tourism sector needs, analyse tourism trends and future projections in post de-growth transformative scenarios, include requirements, challenges and needs from professional current and future employers to validate the programme's content and its applicability.

### 3. Study programme

- > Ensure coherence and adequacy of intended learning outcomes across the joint programme, it is recommended to further define coordination mechanisms

between participating universities and establish a systematic process for developing collaborative arrangements with associated partners.

- > Inform prospective and actual students about the actual workload per ECTS in each university.
- > Conduct a student survey at the end of each term per course to ensure equitable distribution of workload among the four universities, monitored closely by the Consortium Academic Board.

#### **4. Admission and recognition**

- > Clearly specify the opportunities available for the recognition of prior learning, previous qualifications, and periods of study and ensure that this information will be easily accessible in the programme's website.

#### **5. Learning, teaching, and assessment**

- > Clarify criteria and processes for work placements and industry research projects (M10).
- > Outline connections between preparatory courses (M09) and industry involvement.
- > Detail requirements for preparatory courses (M07) to guide master's thesis topic selection and supervisor appointments.
- > Provide detailed procedures and criteria for appointing supervisors in M11.
- > Create a dedicated Examination Board within the Academic Board.
- > Elaborate a comprehensive guide for master's thesis process (proposal approval, elaboration, assessment).
- > Publish a clear grading system for the master's thesis evaluation.
- > A three-member panel, including the supervisor and two external members, is suggested for the evaluation of modules M10 and M11.

#### **6. Students support**

- > Since the delays in obtaining visa by Embassies and finding appropriate student housing are common issues to all EMJMs, a common policy for students obtaining visas (when needed) and finding accommodation is recommended.
- > Consider developing a unified student support handbook that outlines all available services and how to access them across the consortium.

- > Provide clear information on personal support services for students' mobility during the 4<sup>th</sup> semester, ensuring effective management of relocation and project engagement at partner universities.
- > Building on the alumni network after studies.

## **7. Resources**

- > Provide a clearer explanation of the simultaneous participation of experienced teachers and post-doc teachers in each module.

## **8. Transparency and documentation**

- > Include a description of the structure and content of the programme's website and educational guides in future documentation.

## **9. Quality Assurance**

- > A dedicated quality assurance board, comprising representatives from the various bodies involved in the system is advised.