ZEvA
Zentrale Evaluations- & Akkreditierungsagentur

Assessment Report

on the Joint Program

"Political Science – Integration and Governance" (PoSIG)

Submitted by: Paris Lodron University Salzburg

following the

European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programs

21. Meeting of the ZEvA Commission on 9 July 2024

Study Program	Joint Degree	ECTS	Program Duration	Type of Program	Annual Intake Capacity
Political Science – Integration and Governance	M.A./M.Sc.	120	4 Semesters	Full Time	40

ISCED-F 2013: 0312
EQF level: 7

Consortium Partners:
University of Salzburg (PLUS)
Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje (UKIM)
European University of Tirana (UET)
University of Tirana (UTIR)
University of Business and Technology Pristina (UBT)
University of Sarajevo (UNSA)
Sarajevo School of Science Technology (SSST)
University of Trieste (UNITS)
University of Pristina (UP)
University of Montenegro (UMO) (in planning)

Self-report submitted: 18 March 2024

Date of site visit: 12 April 2024

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Website of the program: https://posig.info/

The composition of the expert group is as follows:

Representation of academia:
Prof. Dr. Christiane Lemke, Emerita Professor for political science, Leibniz University Hannover, to date: Adjunct Professor, Centre for European Studies, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill as well as Senior non-resident Fellow, Centre for Global Affairs, New York

Prof. Dr. Davor Trlin, International Burch University Sarajevo, Department of International Relations and European Studies

Representation of professional practice:
Philipp Brugner (M.A., B.A.), Project Manager, Communications Manager and R&I policy expert at the Centre for Social Innovation GmbH (ZSI) in Vienna and working as a freelance journalist

Student representative:
Mr John Brüne (B.A.), Student of „Angewandte Statistik" (M.Sc.) at the University of Göttingen, B.A. „2-Fach Bachelor Politikwissenschaften und VWL"

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Hanover, 30.06.2024

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1. Accreditation Decision of the ZEvA Commission

The ZEvA Commission follows the experts' report and recommendations and takes note of the consortium's written response to the accreditation report.

The commission accredits the Joint Master's programme in Political Science - Integration & Governance (PoSIG) without conditions for a period of six years.

The accreditation decision is based on the standards and criteria stipulated in the European Approach for the Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes.

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2. Central Outcomes of the Assessment and Final Vote of the Expert Panel

2.1 Summary of the Experts' Findings

The expert group considers the Master's program to be well designed and clearly aligned with recent political developments in Europe and the Western Balkans. All partners have brought in new perspectives and current ideas to the curriculum. While ten years ago the starting point of the joint program was capacity building at the participating universities of the East, the new developments of the joint program show a more egalitarian approach focusing on the combination of integration and governance in Europe and the Western Balkans.

It is in the nature of a study program like "Political Science – Integration and Governance (PoSIG)" to include a multitude of topics and methods. Nevertheless, the program still follows a clear structure: e.g. methodological competences are placed in the first year and a short internship divides the first and the second year. Students are requested from the beginning to choose two specialisations out of the following five:

- Comparative Politics
- European Integration
- International Relations
- Public Administration and Policy
- Political Theory

Despite its thematical logic, the course structure is quite complex. This is due to the number of partners that can be separated into five partners that also offer modules of the first year and four partners that offer modules for the second year only. This results in many potential mobility tracks and leaves room for individual specialization. All participating universities are actively involved in the joint design and delivery of the program. At all study sites, it can be expected that students will be adequately supported because experiences with and structures in welcoming international students are well established and documented. The special mobility needs of the students are accounted for at all levels.

It should be noted that the application of the European Approach for this joint program goes beyond the facilitation of an accreditation procedure, including the intended reduction of redundancies and the acceptance of its results in the various partner countries. Rather, it should be a demonstration of jointness that increases the visibility of the individual universities, sharpens their university profile and ultimately increases their attractiveness for prospective students. The application of the European Approach, therefore, also functions as a message to further promote the program.

The experts found the program, overall, of good quality. Nevertheless, some room for optimization was identified including e.g. a better visualisation on the website of the possible mobility tracks and a more formalised approach to evaluations and student surveys.

2.2 Recommendations for Enhancement

As already described, the experts found the program to be of good overall quality. The following

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recommendations are aimed at improving the program even further:

Structure and Curriculum

- Due to the high complexity of the different possible mobility pathways, it is recommended to develop a visualization (e.g. in the form of a flowchart or interactive timeline) on the website to make it easier for potential students to choose.
- The obligatory internship is well described in the appendix to the consortium agreement but for students' sake it should also be covered by a module description. Then, it becomes immediately clear which competences are expected to result out of the internship and how they relate to the overall curriculum.
- To attract even more qualified students, it is desirable to better define the uniqueness of the degree program, present the associated career opportunities and make them visible to the outside world.
- It is recommended that documentation of selected Teaching Academy sessions be made accessible online. This could include formats such as recordings or other suitable media, shared through appropriate channels to attract new students and faculty.

Resources:

- The expert group also recommends to regularly update the literature used in classes to meet high quality academic standards.

Transparency:

- In order to increase the transparency of the program, it is recommended to encourage partners to regularly check and update websites or links in case of changes. This includes that the PoSIG website provides links to current examination regulations at partner universities in English language.
- Partners should be encouraged to make their local examination requirements always available in English.
- It should be made transparent that the recognition of academic achievements and the awarding of degrees in the consortium will always be based on the definitions and criteria of the Lisbon Convention. Therefore, the Lisbon Convention should be clearly named e.g. in the appendix A of the consortium agreement as reference for recognition. In addition, it should be evaluated under which circumstances the recognition of prior learning is possible at partner universities.

Quality management

- Chapter 5 of the Quality Handbook (Annex D of the Consortium Agreement) should include a more formalized approach to student and graduate surveys. These surveys should include a formal assessment of student workload.
- It is highly recommended to strengthen the alumni network. This may include upgrading the ongoing social media activities but should also go beyond. An alumni survey can also be used to gather further ideas and to assess the impact of the program.

2.3 Final Vote of the Expert Panel

The expert panel recommends the Joint Master's program "Political Science – Integration and Governance (PoSIG)" (M.A.) for accreditation without conditions. In accordance with the stipulations of the European Approach for the Quality Assurance of Joint Study Programs, accreditation is recommended for a period of six years.

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1 Purpose, Design and Context of the Assessment Procedure

II. Assessment Report of the Expert Panel

1. Purpose, Design and Context of the Assessment Procedure

In August 2023, ZEvA Hannover received the mandate from Paris Lodron University Salzburg to conduct an external quality assessment of the Joint Master's program in "Political Science - Integration & Governance" (PoSIG).

The program had been jointly developed by ten European universities as part of the Erasmus+ KA2 Capacity Building Project 561485 - 2015-2017 "Curriculum Development Joint European Political Science MA (EuroPS)", with Paris Lodron University Salzburg functioning as the co-ordinating institution. Since then, some partners have changed and the program has further developed. Overall, however, it is still the same partnership and program.

The consortium decided to apply for an accreditation within the framework of the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Study Programs (hereinafter: EA). The EA has been implemented fully or partly in the national legislative frameworks of all member countries of the consortium or is considered as supportive for national accreditations.

For the purpose of the assessment, ZEvA assembled an expert panel (compare following chapter). In addition to the self-report submitted in English language by the consortium (including all annexes), the experts received written background information on the European Approach and further documents and information from the agency. Before the on-site talks, experts had time for desktop validation. On-site talks with the representatives of the PoSIG consortium took place on 12 April 2024. One day before, the ZEvA project coordinator met with the experts to discuss the documents provided and to clarify their roles and tasks.

Representatives of all signatories of the consortium agreement and degree-awarding universities participated in the talks, including members of the university leadership boards, students and graduates, administrative staff, academic and administrative program coordinators and members of the teaching faculty. All discussion rounds were conducted hybrid – meaning some participants were present and others participated online (the agenda and schedule of the site visit including the list of participants is in the annex of the report).

This assessment report is based on the self-evaluation report of the consortium and the outcomes of the discussion rounds. It is meant to serve as a basis for the accreditation decision of the ZEvA commission.

2. Panel of Experts

In all external quality assurance procedures, ZEvA applies the peer-review principle. The expert group of this procedure includes two experts from academia, one from professional practice and one student. Accordingly, the panel of this procedure adequately represents expertise in the relevant disciplines, the labour market/world of work in the relevant field(s), the students' perspective and expertise in quality assurance in higher education. Experts are carefully selected based on the areas of expertise that has to be covered in the expert group. The panel includes members from two participating countries involved in the consortium. Additional

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2 Panel of Experts

criteria to be considered are e.g. disciplinary background and among others experience with quality assurance procedures and gender diversity. Upon proposal of the project officer in charge, the panel was approved by the ZEvA Commission and by the consortium.

Besides the criteria mentioned above, panel members must be independent and impartial. ZEvA signs contractual agreements with experts. These agreements include a code of conduct and a manual detailing their task and cooperation with the agency. Through these contracts, ZEvA ensures their impartiality. The following criteria for conflict of interest are applied throughout:

- Family ties or personal relations or conflicts.

- Teaching positions (also as external lecturer or guest professor) at the university to be assessed within the last 3 years or in the foreseeable future.

- Participation in on-going or recently completed appointment procedures at the university to be assessed.

- Participation of members of the university to be assessed in recent assessments of the experts' university.

- Personal or shared economic interest in the accreditation.

- Direct competition of the university to be assessed with the expert's projects or programs.

- Close cooperation (e.g., conjoint research projects or other close collaboration) within the last 3 years.

- Current or recent enrolment as a student at the university to be assessed.

In all procedures, the Higher Education Institutions (HEI) can object to the composition of the expert group but has no explicit vetoing right. Objections can be based either on conflicts of interest or insufficient expertise for the subject matter to be assessed. In this procedure, the expert group was presented to the HEIs and no objections were raised.

The experts would like to thank all members of the consortium for the comprehensive self-evaluation report and the open, constructive discussion during the talks in Salzburg.

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3 Introduction: The Study Program at a Glance

3.   Introduction: The Study Program at a Glance

The "**Joint Master's Program in Political Science – Integration and Governance" (PoSIG)** was developed as part of the Erasmus+ KA2 Capacity Building Project in 2015-2017 "Curriculum Development Joint European Political Science MA (EuroPS)". The project resulted from continuous academic exchange of staff and students within several previous Erasmus Mundus projects and Erasmus+ Credit mobilities. EuroPS was led by the University of Salzburg (Department of Political Science and Sociology) and its main goal was to develop a joint Master's program in Political Science together with a multilateral management framework. As a modernization and Europeanisation project, its further aim was to support and enhance the standards of higher education in the European Union, to intensify regular academic exchange of good practice and sustainable networking between EU partners and partners on the Western Balkan. The project ran from October 2015 until September 2017 and included the first intake of students in 2017 based on a call from February 2017.

The nowadays educational goal of PoSIG is summarised as follows: ***POSIG combines knowledge about integration policies in a globalized world with knowledge about the needs for good governance necessary for the management of integration in domestic politics*** (see www.posig.info).

The ten partner institutions from seven different countries contribute with their specific academic profiles in

- Comparative Politics,
- European Integration,
- International Relations,
- Public Administration and Policy,
- Political Theory and Methodology.

Some of the cornerstones of the program and the consortium are:

- The program is jointly developed and delivered.
- It is open to all international students who have a BA Political Science degree and a certain level of methodology education.
- The program has a scope of 120 ECTS credits.
- The regular duration is 4 semesters.
- The language of instruction for courses at all partner institutions is English.
- There is a highly flexible mobility scheme.
- All partners are (potentially) degree-giving.
- The awarded degree is a joint degree (no double or multiple degrees).

PoSIG qualifies students for the following employment possibilities:

- in public administration at local and national levels, parliaments and political parties, non-governmental organisations, interest groups and trade unions, the business sector, media and public relations.
- in international organisations, foreign services (careers in diplomacy), in institutions of the European Union and in international profit and non-profit organizations,

development agencies and NGOs.

- in the field of civic and political education (foundations, academies, educational institutes, etc.) and academic careers (teaching and research at universities and research institutions.

4. Quality Assessment of the Study Program

4.1 Eligibility

4.1.1 Status

> *The institutions that offer a joint program 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 program 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.*

According to the self-assessment report, all partners of the consortium are

● state-recognized in their respective countries and

● entitled to award joint degrees.

The German databank "Anabin"[1], which provides information on institutions and academic degrees, confirms that all institutions involved are recognised as higher education institutions.

Every single partner has checked with their legal authorities regarding their right to award joint degrees.

As of March 2024, the following documents are available:

Partner institution	Cooperation Agreement	Diploma Supplement	HEI status declaration
University of Salzburg, Austria	Signed	Yes	Yes
Cyril and Methodius University, Skopje, Macedonia	Signed	Yes	Yes
European University of Tirana, Albania	Signed	Yes	Yes
University of Tirana, Albania	Signed	Yes	Yes
University of Business and Technology Pristina, Kosovo	Signed	Yes	Yes
University of Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina	Signed	Yes	Yes
University Sarajevo School of Science and Technology, Bosnia and Herzegovina	Signed	Yes	Yes
University of Trieste	Signed	Yes	Yes
University of Pristina	Signed	Yes	Yes
University of Montenegro*	pending	pending	Yes

*The University of Montenegro is preparing to join the consortium but has not yet signed the agreement.

An agreement on the Joint Master's Program in Political Science – Integration and Governance (PoSIG) was approved by the Coordinators Board on 25 April 2023 in Salzburg (appendix 1).

During the on-site assessment, on April 12, 2024, the university partners explained that in

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[1] https://anabin.kmk.org/no_cache/filter/institutionen.html The database is provided and maintained by the Standing Conference of the German Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs. The database was developed in 1997 in cooperation with the Hessian Ministry of Science and Art, the Central Office for Foreign Education, the Equivalence Centre of the Austrian Federal Ministry of Science and Culture and the Equivalence Centre of the Luxembourg Ministry of Science.

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addition to the University of Montenegro (UMO) also the University of Belgrade (UB) is planning to join the consortium. As for UMO, also the UB would offer modules for the second year only and also the University of Belgrade is a recognised Higher Education Institution.

The consortium is issuing a joint degree. In most cases it is a Master of Arts. Only in case of Albania and North Macedonia it is due to national regulation that a Master of Science will be issued. This takes only place once the final thesis and therefore the last semester will be studied at one of the Albanian partner universities. Information on the degrees is given by the diploma supplement. An example of the diploma supplement (appendix H1) is depicting the equivalent degree in the countries which contributed (max. 4). A diploma supplement is providing how information e.g. on the level of qualification and access requirements translates into the national systems of the participating partners.

Experts' Appraisal

The degree-awarding partners are public and private universities. As such, they are all fully (state-)recognized by the authorities in their respective countries and in the Bologna region[2]. They are all entitled to award degrees at Master level and to actively participate in joint programs. The awarded degree (Master of Arts in most cases and in the case of Albania and North Macedonia the Master of Science) is clearly associated with the second cycle of qualifications in the Framework of Qualifications for the European Higher Education Area. The universities have ensured that the awarded degree is in line with their national higher education degree systems. The compilation of the contents of the different diploma supplements depicts how the Joint Master Degree is embedded in the national higher education system.

As already stipulated in the context of the first accreditation procedure, the experts have no doubt whatsoever that the participating universities and the jointly-awarded degree fulfil all formal requirements of the European Approach. Based on the formal stipulations of the cooperation agreement, it can be safely assumed that the joint degree is in accordance with national legislative demands and will therefore be fully recognized in the respective countries. This does not mean that the accreditation result of the European approach can substitute national accreditations in all participating countries. Still, the consortium perceives the procedure as very valuable for all partners. They argue that, in some cases, it will facilitate national accreditation and, in addition, it functions as an important message and as a marketing tool for becoming a partner of this consortium.

The experts regard the standard as fulfilled.

4.1.2   Joint Design and Delivery

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

The program had been jointly developed by ten European universities as part of the Erasmus+ KA2 Capacity Building Project 561485 - 2015-2017 "Curriculum Development Joint Eu-

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[2] The term Bologna region refers to all signatory states of the so-called 'Bologna Declaration'.

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ropean Political Science MA (EuroPS)", with the Paris Lodron University Salzburg functioning as the coordinating institution. Since then, some partners changed and the program further developed but overall it is still the same partnership and program.

In the self-report under 2.1.2 a timeline displays all relevant activities of the partners from initiating the joint program until now. It shows that not only several train-the-trainers workshops took place but also meetings of the established quality board. The workshops in 2016 and 2017, in which the module descriptions were jointly created using constructive alignment, was also very important for the joint design and delivery of the program.

The cooperation (consortium) agreement defines the different responsibilities of partners.

The consortium decided to apply for an accreditation within the framework of the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Study Programs (hereinafter: EA). The European Approach has been implemented fully or partly in the national legislative frameworks of all member countries of the consortium or is considered as supportive for national accreditations.

EuroPS is the acronym of the Erasmus+ project "Curriculum Development for Joint Master in European Political Science", funded by the program Erasmus+ Capacity Building in Higher Education by the European Commission in 2015. EUROPS consortium is the group of universities from EU and Western Balkans that worked in the past years to develop the joint master PoSIG. (FAQs)

The experts discussed why on the website of PoSIG the call for applications for 2024/25 also lists several universities outside of the PoSIG-consortium, including some in Azerbaijan, Lebanon, Ukraine and Georgia. It became clear that these countries are not members of the consortium but PoSIG would accept students from these countries. The countries are right now of particular interest for the program because, based on the Erasmus+ KA 107 Call 2021/22/23, grants are available per academic year in 2024/25 also for PoSIG students coming from the four countries mentioned before and, in addition, from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro and Armenia. Certainly, participation in the program is also possible for students of other countries and universities under general conditions of Erasmus +.

Experts' Appraisal

The experts appreciate the idea to include a partner from Serbia in the consortium to enrich its strategic portfolio and enhance regional representation. Apparently, the University of Belgrade already participated in the annual Teachers Academy.

The experts discussed whether it is beneficial for the program to have two partner universities competing for PoSIG students in some countries and whether it would not be better to have only one partner per country. When looking at the historical development of the joint program, it became clear that this is due to the fact that the initiative initially focused on capacity building and not necessarily on the development of a joint degree program. Ultimately, this is the situation and the partners do not see this as a problem. The joint design and delivery are described very well in the self-report and the reaccreditation process was used as an opportunity to jointly assess and develop the program further, resulting in the adapted curriculum that forms the basis of further assessments below.

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The experts regard the standard as fulfilled.

4.1.3   Cooperation Agreement

The terms and conditions of the joint program 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 program*
- *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.*

The cooperation agreement defines under No. 5 *"The joint degree shall only be awarded after the student has completed his/her studies in accordance with the PoSIG curriculum by attending two to four POSIG-UP[3]s (90 ECTS from courses of the program, 30 ECTS for the master's thesis and its defence).*

Depending on the institution awarding the degree, graduates of this program will be awarded a joint Master of Arts (MA) (§ 1 (4)). Also, the type of degree according to the joint diploma certificate is the joint Master (MA) degree. Below this degree, the equivalents of the two to four degrees of the respective universities that were visited by the student are shown. Only in case, the universities in Tirana or in Skopje (UKIM, UET, UTIR) are chosen by students to submit the master thesis, the awarded degree will be a Master of Science (see 4.1.1).

Mobility is described under § 9 of the curriculum[4]. *"The international mobility of students has to cover academic studies at least at one or two POSIG partner universities in the first academic year (60 ECTS), and one or two POSIG partner universities in Sarajevo, Tirana, Skopje, Podgorica or Pristina in the second academic year (60 ECTS)."* Students must submit a plan for their international mobility when applying to the program.

The cooperation agreement is signed by all partners (University of Montenegro is in the process) and complemented by the following 11 appendices:

- Appendix A: PoSIG curriculum
- Appendix B: Criteria and procedure for student selection
- Appendix C: Convention for the conversion of grades
- Appendix D: Quality management handbook
- Appendix E: Examination book
- Appendix F: Teaching handbook including forms for course and module descriptions
- Appendix G: Student services and student elections

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[3] University Partners
[4] In Austria the term „curriculum" is generally used for the document that regulates study programmes including the course of study and creates a binding framework for lectureres and students. It therefore has a legal character and is much more than just a description of the study programme including its modules and intended learning outcomes.

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● Appendix H: Diploma supplement

The PoSIG network currently comprises the following partner institutions:

Partner institution	Abbr.	Type	Students	Fields of study	Research focus	PoSIG member since	PoSIG intakes and graduates since 2017
University of Salzburg	PLUS	public univ.	17.000	science, humanities, social science, law	biology, psychology, social science, humanities, law, European Union studies	2015	intake: 86 graduates: 27 (together with partners)
Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje	UKIM	public univ.	22.000	natural and life sciences, medical sciences, social sciences, humanities, arts, technical sciences	natural and life sciences, medical sciences, social sciences, humanities, arts, technical sciences	2015	intake: 6 graduates: 3
European University of Tirana	UET	private univ.	4.000	social sciences, natural sciences, law, humanities, arts, technical medical sciences, engineering, architecture, informatics, economics	social sciences, natural sciences, law, humanities, arts, technical medical sciences, engineering, architecture, informatics, economics	2015	intake: 3 graduates: 2
University of Tirana	UTIR	public univ.	22.000	education, humanities, social sciences & journalism, business and law, Natural sciences, mathematics statistics, IT	education, humanities, social sciences & journalism, business and law, Natural sciences, mathematics statistics, IT	2015	intake: 14 graduates: 8
University of Business and Technology Pristina	UBT	private univ.	10.000	social science, law, media, medical science, engineering, architecture, informatics, computer sciences, agriculture , nutrition science	social science, political science, security policies, law, media and communication, medical science, engineering, architecture, informatics, cybersecurity, Artificial Intelligence, agriculture, nutrition science	2015	intake: 17 graduates: 0
University of Sarajevo	UNSA	public univ.	27,000	social sciences, humanities, medical sciences, natural, mathematical and biotechnical sciences,	social sciences, humanities, medical sciences, natural, mathematical and biotechnical sciences,	2015	intake: 19 graduates: 13

				technical sciences, Arts	technical sciences, Arts		
Sarajevo School of Science Technology	SSST	private HEI	600	medicine, dentistry, computer sciences, game design, political science, international relations, economics and business, modern languages, film	computer sciences, political science, migrations, gender equality, green energy and sustainable development, AI and medicine, health tech	2015	intake: 0 graduates 0
University of Trieste	UTS	public univ.	16.000	natural and life science, medical science, social science, humanity, technical science	UTS has high research institutions - such as SISSA, area science park and elettra sincrotrone - a unique system in Europe for its density of research staff.	2023	intake: 0 graduates 0 (new partner)
University of Pristina	UP	Public univ.	25.000	natural sciences and mathematics, law, economics, teacher education, philosophy, medicine, sports and physical education, technical sciences, agriculture, arts	life sciences, computer sciences and information technology, international relations and peacebuilding	2023	intake: 0 graduates 0 (new partner)
University of Montenegro	*UMO*	*Public univ.*	*21.000*	*economics, engineering, law, history, agriculture, biological and medical research*	*urban and regional planning, classics and ancient history, computer engineering, physics, environmental science*	*2023*	*intake: 0 graduates 0 (new partner)*

All participating institutions have **accredited programs in Political Science** at Bachelor level and have also accreditations for study programs at Master level, some also on PhD level. All partners benefit from the complementarity of the consortium partners' academic profile.

The implementation of this curriculum is regulated in a **cooperation agreement**. This agreement includes regulations for the governance of the program and its quality management to guarantee an integrated character of the program. The Western Balkan partners additionally deliver the specific academic competencies regarding political developments in the region within these subjects. Basically, all partners are degree-giving partners: The degree is given to alumni enrolled at a partner university for at least one academic term.

The following diagram gives an **overview** of the PoSIG-consortium and its contributions to the curriculum:
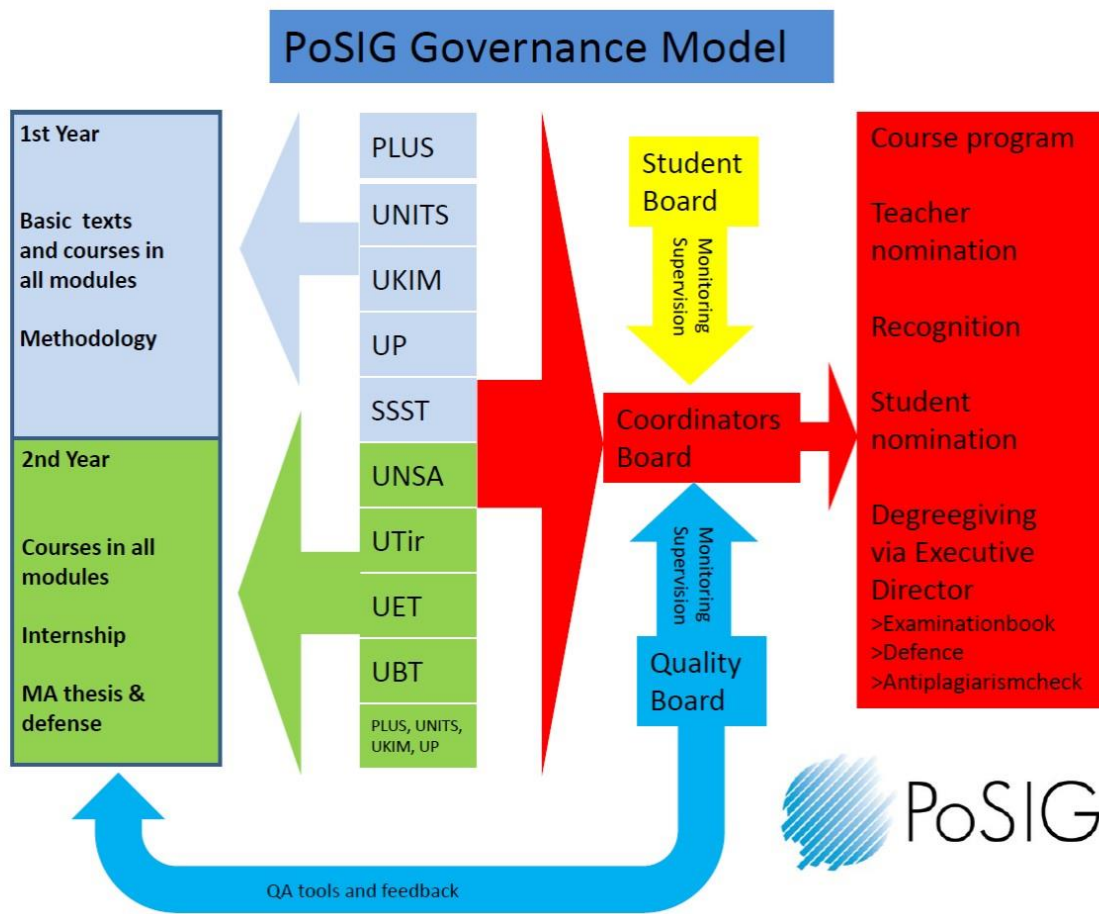
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PoSIG Governance Model

1st Year

Basic texts and courses in all modules

Methodology

2nd Year

Courses in all modules

Internship

MA thesis & defense

PLUS
UNITS
UKIM
UP
SSST
UNSA
UTir
UET
UBT
PLUS, UNITS, UKIM, UP

Student Board

Monitoring Supervision

Coordinators Board

Monitoring Supervision

Quality Board

QA tools and feedback

Course program

Teacher nomination

Recognition

Student nomination

Degreegiving via Executive Director
>Examinationbook
>Defence
>Antiplagiarismcheck

PoSIG

It is mentioned in section 6 of the consortium agreement that recognition of courses for the PoSIG curriculum is granted in accordance with the PoSIG course program published at www.posig.info. Recognition of a course not listed in the PoSIG course program needs the supporting vote of the coordinators of all POSIG-UPs attended by the student.

Experts' Appraisal

Recognition of academic achievements among the partners is transparent and well organised. Also, the process once students want to choose modules that are not part of the published POSIG modules seems to be well established. Everything will be documented in the examination book of the students.

All aspects that are expected to be regulated by the cooperation or consortium agreement are adequately covered. The first appendix to the agreement, the curriculum, is covering, analogous to a study regulation, the denomination of the degree(s), the mobility of students, the examination regulations in brief, the selection of students in brief and the recognition of credits.

The basics of coordination and responsibilities of the partners as well as training and mobility of teachers is already covered in the main document of the agreement. It is complemented by

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the quality management handbook. Selection and admission are also described and regulated in detail under appendix B. Further details of student assessment are provided in the course description of the modules.

The experts regard the standard as *fulfilled*.

4.2 Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs)

4.2.1 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).

The consortium depicts the ILOs as shown in the following table

Intended learning outcomes as defined in the curriculum
Competence in the field of study, in particular:
• comprehensive knowledge about theories in political science, political concepts, actors, institutions, processes, norms and central policy fields in selected modules;
• the ability to understand, assess and apply social science research with high methodological standards to other modules;
• the ability to analyse political and societal problems, based on social science concepts and theories.
Method competences, in particular:
• the ability and knowledge to thoughtfully and critically apply the methodological instruments of empirical-analytical political science research, including the ability to use statistical software, and to plan and carry out independent research;
• the ability to cooperate with others (inter-disciplinarily or in groups), to carry out research together;
• the ability to present complex research and research findings convincingly in front of an audience.
Competence in sound reasoning and judgement, in particular:
• the ability to understand high-level social and political science literature and to critically analyse and assess it by drawing on the insights of neighbouring disciplines (law, economics, sociology, history);
• the ability to assess the presentation of scientific research outcomes, to make comparisons and to give self-reflecting feedback;
• the ability to debate and compare one's own insights and positions with those of others and to modify them, if necessary.
Competence in responsive action, in particular:
• the ability to grasp political and social problems, to develop practical strategies for solutions and to present them in public debates;
• the ability to connect science and political practice;
• the ability to engage in politics effectively on the basis of scientific insights.

§ 1 (2) of the Joint curriculum defines: "This MA Program refers to level 7 of the European

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Qualification Framework, as defined by the European Parliament and the EU Council". The definition of ILOs is the outcome of continuous discussions among partners since the beginning of the program in 2016/2017. Last revisions and validations took place since the coordinators board meeting in 2023, which also led to a syllabus revision.

Experts' Appraisal

The formal requirements to comply with the second cycle of "The framework of qualifications for the European Higher Education Area" are fulfilled because the study program PoSIG covers 120 ECTS.

According to the EQF a typical qualification that signifies completion of the second cycle is for *example that alumni can apply their knowledge and understanding, and problem-solving abilities in new or unfamiliar environment within broader (or multidisciplinary) contexts related to their field of study*. This qualification is e.g. met by the three defined "competences in responsive action" (see table above). Another required qualification is the *ability to integrate knowledge and handle complexity, and formulate judgments with incomplete or limited information,* which includes reflecting on social and ethical responsibilities linked to the application of knowledge and judgments. This qualification is met by the defined "competences in sound reasoning and judgement". In addition, the experts perceive the overarching learning outcomes in regard to methodological competences, communication and to knowledge and understanding in their field of study as adequate. The experts have no doubts that alumni obtain the learning skills to allow them to continue to study in a manner that may be largely self-directed and autonomous. To achieve this ILO, not only the teaching contents and formats contribute but in particular the chosen structure of the program that includes the necessity to make individual choices on mobility tracks. All in all, the ILOs defined cover all key points of the EQF for Master's programs and the ILOs clearly correspond to a Master's level.

The experts regard the standard as *fulfilled*.

4.2.2   Disciplinary field

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

In the self-report it is stated that "it was one of the intentions of the PoSIG consortium not to follow the development at the "Master market" and specify the curriculum on one subfield of Political Science but to offer the whole dimensions of the field". Therefore, the consortium developed a study structure that teaches foundations but also allows students to select two out of five "bigger" modules (or sub-disciplines) to develop an individual academic profile. This is combined with the opportunity to complete courses from all other modules as well.

On the curriculum level the intended learning outcomes are implicitly organised along the differentiation of knowledge, skills and competencies, whereas on the module level all definitions of intended learning outcomes follow this distinction explicitly (see the module descriptions in

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the annex of the curriculum). Even at the course level (below module level) the descriptions partly follow this distinction.

During on-site discussions PoSIG partners added that the uniqueness of the program lies in the combination of integration and governance within political science. In addition, it was mentioned that PoSIG is the only program including many political science departments of Universities on the Western Balkans.

 Salzburg is a good place where academics of the Balkan region can meet and experts can exchange on topics with representatives that also live in the country they are scientifically reflecting on.

Experts' Appraisal

The ILOs sufficiently reflect the different disciplines involved, in particular political and social sciences, but, e.g., also law, economics and history.
Overall, the ILOs are in line with the contents of the curriculum. To a certain extent the ILOs seem to be quite generic but this is due to the fact that several mobility tracks with many electives and the possibility of specialisations prevent becoming more specific at this overarching level.

The expert group discussed the title of the program (Political Science – Integration and Governance) and in how far the aspect of governance is clearly and sufficiently reflected in the curriculum. Aspects of governance are taught in several modules as e.g. Comparative Politics or International Relations. It depends on the students selection of fields of specialization to which extent governance issues will be part of their studies.
Nevertheless, as governance is part of the program title it would be desirable that it becomes better visible and attention should be paid that all students, independently of a chosen mobility track, receive teaching and learning inputs on governance. This issue is related to discussions on the uniqueness of the program. The experts concluded that, despite its very special profile, the (attractive) specifics of the program could be displayed better resulting in an even higher demand of qualified students.

The experts regard the standard as _fulfilled_.

The experts like to recommend the following:

In order to attract even more qualified students, it is desirable to better define the uniqueness of the degree program, present the associated career opportunities and make them visible to prospective students and the public.

4.2.3   Achievement

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

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The consortium explains how the structure of the curriculum enables students to follow their specific mobility track (requiring them to study at least at two partners). The PoSIG consortium has to assure that they can take all courses of their modules, i.e. to achieve the intended learning outcomes. Each (specialisation) module starts with a course in Basic Texts. Also, methodology is placed at the beginning of the program. This way students get an extensive overview of the standard literature in the field, regarding both theory and methodology (6 ECTS). On this basis, they have to demonstrate in the two selected modules their competence to apply theory and methodology in the field (2 courses, each 6 ECTS).

§ 11 of the appendix A (Admission Requirements for Exams) regulates the requirements for starting the final thesis and therefore contributes to the overall achievement. The completion of the Master thesis seminar during the third or fourth semester is supposed to guarantee that students are well prepared to develop a thesis research proposal and to carry out the thesis work. The seminar will allow faculty to additionally supervise the student's research work during the thesis project. Work on this thesis is supervised by two professors from two different partners. The MA thesis projects of students are concluding from the methodological and thematic inputs of courses and can go beyond these incentives by using the students' individual experiences, motivations and should be in relation to their qualification/career strategies. All partners are involved in local study programs in the relevant fields; therefore, they are familiar with the requirements of the job market.

The consortium explained and described how modules and their courses were selected to contribute to the overall achievement. It is worth mentioning that also a short internship may connect academic and non-academic learning space and is supposed to help identifying research interests and questions. Support is offered when students need advice in this important period of orientation.

The consortium provided a list of all Master theses submitted during the last years to show the different topics covered. To prove the implementation of the "constructive alignment", the consortium also made available a list of questions as suggestion for examiners in the master thesis defence in the respective protocol template. This is one of the measures to harmonise supervision.

During the on-site visit it was also discussed how far graduates have succeeded on the job market. Written evidence was provided in the PoSIG Quality Report 2023/24 (App. 19). Evidence according to the consortium is reported in various testimonials, in a series of round table talks with active students, dropouts and alumni in June 2022 and in a PoSIG Master's thesis (Stanic, 2023). The thesis used interviews of three generation of POSIG students to conclude on their incentives to return to their home countries in the Western Balkans after graduation. This has to be analysed in relation to students matriculated, drop outs and graduates (see tables under chapter 3 of the self-report "Key Statistical Data").

Experts' Appraisal

The overall organization is suitable to achieve the learning outcomes. During on-site discussions it became clear that the consortium knows well where their graduates currently stay and work (or follow a PhD). Apparently, their positions are adequate and match the intentions of the program of their desired graduate profile. Many take up positions in European working environments or dealing with European topics.

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The experts had also the opportunity to "browse" a couple of Master theses and concluded that they provide sufficient proof that desired learning outcomes are achieved.

The curriculum attaches great importance to the research orientation of the degree program and the research skills of graduates, as evidenced by several ILOs, in which the competence to conduct and present independent research is established. The "Teaching Academies" also endeavour to combine teaching and research. In this context, it would be useful to track how many graduates continue their studies with a doctorate. The consortium could even define the desired number of graduates who are supposed to pursue a doctorate.

The experts acknowledge that the consortium knows where their graduates remain. But taken into consideration the fact that the dropout rate of the program is rather high a more structured approach to graduate surveys is highly recommended. Certainly, it must be taken into consideration that an international program was extremely affected during the years 2020 to 2022. Also, the drop outs are tracked and many just changed into the classical Master program in Salzburg and did not abandon their studies (see table 3.5 of the self-report).

In the context of the new program structure and (desired) increasing student intakes, the consortium recommends conducting more formalized (graduate) surveys so that the link between stated career goals and reality can be tracked, especially as the number of graduates increases. Furthermore, a systematic approach helps to analyse these correlations and thereby creates a feedback opportunity for the program to enable further improvements. Concerning aspects of alumni networks please see chapter 4.6.

The experts regard the standard as *fulfilled*.

4.2.4   Regulated Professions

If relevant for the specific joint program, 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.

Not applicable.

4.3   Study Program

4.3.1   Curriculum

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

All in all, the modules including optional modules are offered over the 4 semesters as can be seen in the table below. In the beginning of the course catalogue (Annex 6) a table demonstrates the alignment of ILOs and modules. The logic of the program is based on the fact that all partners offer modules in political science and neighbouring sciences on Master level and the courses offered provide in summary an added value to all partners. As modules and courses are not offered exclusively for PoSIG students, they mix up with "regular students" of

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other master degree courses (in the case of PLUS: "Political Science" also conducted in English).

The Master's Program consists of 10 obligatory courses, 1 internship of 6 ECTS, 24 ECTS of additional (optional) courses, and a Master's thesis, with a total number of 120 ECTS credits. The Master's thesis is worth 30 ECTS credits, incl. the preparation for the Master's Thesis Defence which is accredited with 2 ECTS credits.

An overview is given in the following table (including the 5 thematic options to choose from):

Obligatory Elective Modules (2 of 5)	**36**
Political Theory	(18)
Comparative Politics	(18)
Public Policy & Administration	(18)
International Relations	(18)
European Integration	(18)
Obligatory Courses	**24**
Internship	(6)
Course Methods I	(6)
Course Methods II	(6)
Master's Thesis Seminar	(6)
Obligatory Elective Courses (1 of 2)	**6**
Advanced Methods in Political Science	(6)
Applied Course	(6)
Additional Courses	**24**
Master's Thesis	**28**
Master's Thesis Defence	**2**
Total	**120**

The recommended areas from which students can choose additional courses are:

- European Union Studies
- Gender Studies
- Geography and Spatial Planning
- Communication Science
- Law (e.g., Public/Constitutional Law, International Law, European Law)
- Regional Studies
- Sociology, Social Psychology and Educational Science
- Sustainability Studies
- Political Economy
- Contemporary History
- Psychology and Political Psychology

To support PoSIG students to conduct their internship, they are provided with a list of institutions where they can complete the obligatory 4-week internship. In case students wish to complete their internship with another institution, the Executive Director will decide about it.

To show the distribution of modules and partners and to provide an overview which modules are offered where and when, the following Course Plan was developed. In addition, the overview distinguishes between the obligatory elective modules (the specialisations), the obligatory modules that have to be taken by all PoSIG students, the obligatory electives and the additional electives.

The Course Plan of the PoSIG Consortium helps to identify the different mobility options:

Obligatory Elective Modules (2 modules out of 5):	Term 1	Term 2	Term 3	Term 4
Political Theory				
Basic Texts Political Theory: Democracy and Legitimacy		UNITS		
Political Theory		UNITS	UKIM, UNSA, UTIR, UET, UNITS	UKIM, UTIR, UET
Comparative Politics				
Basic Texts Comparative Politics	PLUS, UKIM	UKIM		
Comparative Politics	PLUS, UKIM, SSST	PLUS, UKIM	UKIM, UTIR, UNSA, SSST, UET, PLUS	UKIM, UTIR, SSST, UET, PLUS
Public Policy & Administration				
Basic Texts Public Policy & Administration	UP			
Public Policy & Administration	UP	UKIM	UTIR, UKIM, UP	UTIR, UKIM
International Relations				
Basic Texts International Relations	SSST, PLUS			
Course	PLUS, SSST	PLUS, UNITS	UKIM, UNSA, SSST, UTIR, UET, UBT	UKIM, SSST, UTIR, UET, UBT
European Integration				
Basic Texts European Integration – Multilevel Politics	PLUS, UKIM	UKIM		
Course	PLUS, SSST, UKIM	PLUS, UKIM	UTIR, UKIM, SSST, UNSA, PLUS	UTIR, UKIM, SSST, PLUS
Obligatory Courses				
Methods in Political Science I	PLUS, UKIM, SSST, UP			
Methods in Political Science II		PLUS, UNITS, UKIM		
Thesis Seminar			PLUS, UKIM, UTIR, SSST, UET	PLUS, UKIM, UTIR, SSST, UET
Obligatory Elective Courses				
Advanced Methods in Political Science	PLUS	UNITS	PLUS	
Applied Politics	SSST	PLUS, UNITS, UKIM	UKIM, UET, UNSA, SSST	UKIM, UET, SSST, PLUS
Additional Courses				
Optional Courses	PLUS UKIM UP UBT SSST UNSA UNITS UTIR UET	PLUS UKIM UP UBT SSST UNSA UNITS UTIR UET	PLUS UKIM UP UBT SSST UNSA UNITS UTIR UET	PLUS UKIM UP UBT SSST UNSA UNITS UTIR UET

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Experts' Appraisal

The five thematic fields comply with international standards in political science and are well chosen; the study sequence is logical. The optional courses provide a good opportunity to students for complementing their individually chosen study tracks and specialisations. The high number of courses and syllabi to choose from is especially worth mentioning. All in all, it can be ascertained that a student-centred learning process is established.

The approach not to develop specific modules only for the joint program has the advantage that existing resources of partners are efficiently used, which means the sustainability of the program is easily guaranteed and international students mix up with locals for the benefit of all. The disadvantage is that it complicates the development of a ommunity feeling within the PoSIG program.

On the one hand, the many partners and mobility options of the program are certainly a strength of the program. On the other, the consortium has to take care that it does not become a weakness. The course structure is, despite its logic, already quite complex. This is due to the number of partners that can be separated into five partners that offer modules of the first and second year and four partners that offer modules for the second year only (and electives that could be studied also in the first year – but this is a rather theoretical option). In addition, it needs to be differentiated between PLUS, UKIM, SSST, UP and UNITS because UNITS offers only modules in the second semester and year 2. This results in different potential mobility tracks with a possible start in Salzburg (PLUS), Sarajevo (SSST), Pristina (UP) and Skopje (UKIM). Trieste (UNITS) could be chosen with the beginning of the second semester, the remaining partners with the beginning of the third semester.

Prospective students are expected to know from the outset where they want to start their studies and how they want to continue in their following three semesters. An individual mobility pathway can be derived from the Course plan provided (see above). Despite this visualisation it remains difficult to identify mobility tracks that also consider restrictions due to the subject-specific specialisations. Here, the experts recommend the development of a better visualization (e.g. in the form of a flowchart) on the website to make it easier for potential students to choose. However, it was discussed that the best solution would certainly be an online tool that automatically lists the various options after selecting a starting point and the specialisation requirements - analogous to the logic of a Flowchart with the asset of instant online presentation (e.g. as an interactive timeline).

This new structure has the advantage to increase the potential number of students. Before, the maximum intake of 25 students for their first semester in Salzburg was the bottleneck. Now, with four potential entry points the consortium explained during on-site discussion that they may even have an intake capacity of 60 (the self-report mentions 40). The experts suggest that measures and marketing be considered to ensure that enrolment at the other study locations is just as attractive as at the established study location of Salzburg. Otherwise, the bottleneck of capacity expansion will remain in Salzburg.

It can be confirmed that the consortium has carried out a well-thought-through process of aligning ILOs and modules. For the purpose of reaccreditation, all modules were evaluated and updated where necessary. The course descriptions were agreed by the Coordinating Board. This was part of the further development of the program.

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The withdrawal of partners and the integration of new partners corresponds to the typical dynamics of such a large consortium. The experts appreciate the fact that activities to include the University of Belgrade as a partner have been initiated, which fits well with the thematic focus on the Western Balkans. It is also welcomed that the curriculum includes a short internship, which is apparently often completed between the first and second year of study. The expert group discussed whether it would not be beneficial for students to even extend this internship. Independently of the length of the internship, the curriculum is well suited to support the achievement of the defined ILOs.

The experts regard the standard as *fulfilled*.

The experts like to recommend the following:

- *Due to the high complexity of the different possible mobility pathways, it is recommended to develop a visualization (e.g. in the form of a flowchart or interactive timeline) on the website to make it easier for potential students to choose.*

4.3.2 Credits

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

In the document "curriculum" (App. A to the consortium agreement) the application of the ECTS system is regulated under § 1 (7) as following: *"All graduation requirements to be fulfilled by students have been assigned ECTS credits. One ECTS credit equals 25 hours of study, which corresponds to the average number of hours required to achieve the expected learning objectives. An academic year consists of 1500 hours, corresponding to 60 ECTS credits"*.

Modules of the joint program are not smaller than 6 ECTS credits and all modules have credits allocated. In the more detailed syllabi of the modules the ECTS credits are given and as well their corresponding workload. E.g. a module of 6 ECTS got a workload of 150 h which corresponds to their regulation mentioned in the "curriculum document" above. In the syllabi a distinction of the workload is made by workload required for attendance of lectures or assignments and workload needed for self-study (e.g. for reading or exam preparation).

The Examination Book is used to keep track of the credits acquired by the individual student.

In order to improve the transparency of the ECTS accumulation process, it is recommended to create a module description for the internship as well. Although the compulsory internship is well described under § 10 in Annex A of the Consortium Agreement, the descriptions rather cover organisational aspects and a module description provides additional information on the expected learning outcomes of this module and would therefore complement the ECTS documentation.

Experts' Appraisal

The European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) is applied properly to the program as such but also to modules and underlying courses. The distribution of credits is clear and made transparent by course catalogues and plans. An overview is also provided on the website (https://posig.info/curriculum/).

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The experts regard the standard as *fulfilled*.

The experts like to recommend the following:

- *To improve transparency the internship should be also covered by a module description. Then it would become immediately clear which competences are expected to result from the internship and how they relate to the overall curriculum.*

4.3.3   Workload

> *A joint master program 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 program should be monitored.*

The overall distribution of 120 ECTS over 4 semesters and the distribution of the credits over the modules was already shown in chapter 4.3.1.

Taking a simple mobility scheme of conducting the first year at PLUS and the second year at UNSA the sequence and distribution of credits over semesters may look like following:

1 semester (PLUS 30 ECTS): Methods 1 (6 ECTS), Advanced Methods in Political Science (6 ECTS), Module European Integration (12 ECTS), Module Comparative Politics (6 ECTS)

2 semesters (PLUS 30 ECTS): Methods 2 (6 ECTS), Module European Integration (6 ECTS) Applied Politics (6 ECTS), Additional Modules/Courses (12 ECTS)

3 semester UNSA (30 ECTS): Module Comparative Politics (12 ECTS), Additional Modules/Courses (18 ECTS)

4 semester UNSA (30 ECTS): Master Thesis including defence

As a means to harmonise course descriptions and allocation of ECTS the consortium developed a mandatory form for course descriptions with its table for planning students' workload. This goes together with the didactical planning of the course, which is included in the descriptions (row on "teaching methods").

The monitoring of the actual student workload for the single courses is the responsibility of each partner as part of course evaluations. This is also the case for any requirements to adjust in case of inaccurate workload. The quality report that was compiled in preparation for the reaccreditation also explains that feedback workshops included current students and alumni.

The study activity reports based on the Examination Book show that the students are able to acquire 60 ECTS credits in the first year when they receive a full Erasmus+ grant. The consortium describes the identification of the Master thesis project as the most challenging element in the study career. Methodology courses and courses such as Research Design for PoSIG and Internship & Field Experience support the students in this process. The consortium claims

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that the start of internships and other job opportunities during the second-year lead to a lower study intensity and delays in the completion of the program.

Experts' Appraisal

According to the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA) second cycle qualifications typically include 90 or 120 ECTS credits. With the allocation of 120 ECTS the joint program corresponds to this requirement.

As the student and alumni numbers are still rather low these informal qualitative methods of round table talks, workshops and interviews are suited to also monitor workloads, especially as it functions as an add-on to the monitoring and evaluation responsibilities of each partner university. Therefore, it can be summarised that the program is adequately monitored and that credit allocation, defined learning outcomes and estimated workloads are achievable, realistic and suitable. Also, the Teacher's Academy functions as a means to include stakeholders into the feedback and quality management system of the program. Nevertheless, with increasing (desired) student numbers a more formalised approach to monitoring students' achievements and workload is recommended.

Data on completion times and the assessment results of the program and their components is available, systematically shared and discussed among partners.

The experts regard the standard as *fulfilled*.

The experts like to recommend the following:

- *Student surveys should include a formal assessment of student workload (compare recommendation in chapter 4.9).*

4.4 Admission and Recognition

4.4.1 Admission

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

Admission of students is regulated in chapter 2 of the consortium agreement. To further describe and formalise the procedure of selecting students "Criteria and procedures for selection of Students" are defined and form the appendix B2 of the agreement.

Admission requirements are a bachelor's degree in Political Science or in a related field and a certificate (Cambridge, TOEFL,…) providing proof that the level of English is at a minimum of B2 (Common European Framework of Reference for language Skills/CEFR). Students with Bachelor's degrees that followed curricula with less than 15 ECTS in methodology and scientific work have to compensate this with relevant courses in that field. These courses are recognizable as additional courses.

The consortium agreement also stipulates that students in the PoSIG program shall, in terms of the registration procedure and supporting services (supervision, language training, rooming,

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social integration etc.), be granted all privileges of candidates of "mobility programs."

Once the application deadline is met, the Executive Director and members of the Coordinators Board examine the documents, interview (via Skype) the applicants and produce a ranking of applications. The outcome of the selection will be circulated among all partners for comments and within 1 week a final decision on admittance will be taken by the Coordinators Board.

The ranking of applicants is based on:

- Completion of the credits referring to background knowledge required for the program, particularly with reference to the knowledge of quantitative and qualitative research methods Academic performance (final grade, exams' grades)
- Motivation (letter)
- Letters of reference
- Interview
- English language level

During the site visit the procedure was explained even further. Technically the process is hosted by the University of Tirana. Documents including the application form are centrally up-loaded on the PoSIG application website. At the end of the application period a pdf-file is shared in the coordinators and quality board. Then, candidates are jointly evaluated. Coordinators nowadays meet online and exchange assessments about candidates.

The partners explain that the idea of requiring PoSIG applicants to have a Bachelor's degree in Political Science (with at least 15 credits in methodology) and only admitting students with related subjects on the condition that relevant courses have been completed at Bachelor's level makes the teaching of a Master's degree in Political Science possible in the first place, while guaranteeing a minimum of homogeneity of the cohorts.

Experts' Appraisal

The expert group perceives the admission criteria and the selection procedure as transparent and adequate. During the discussions in Salzburg one of the graduates confirmed that extra methodological courses were needed to compensate for a lack of the preceding Bachelor's degree. The implementation of this condition for students with little methodological knowledge is conducive to guarantee that all students are enabled to achieve the described learning outcomes.

The experts regard the standard as *fulfilled*.

4.4.2   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.

"The recognition of examinations completed during studies abroad in the area of compulsory modules and elective modules takes place in accordance with the Lisbon Convention". This clear message to apply the Lisbon Convention can be found in the Joint Guideline of the Senate and the Rectorate which is published in the PLUS university bulletin on the website.

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Based on this Joint Guideline of the Senate and the Rectorate on "Framework Curricula for Bachelor's and Master's Degree Programs and the Guideline for their Application at Paris Lodron University Salzburg" (Version 2023), it can be concluded that the Lisbon Convention is the basis for recognition processes at Paris Lodron University (cf. Ad § 10 International Mobility).

In addition, it is stated in the consortium agreement that "*Joint degree candidates shall be subject to the standard rules, regulations, and enrolment procedures of the host institutions. They shall register with the host institution only for those parts of the PoSIG program which will be carried out under the responsibility of that host institution*".

In chapter 5 of the consortium agreement it is mentioned that "*The joint diploma will be issued*

-   as an official legal record of awarding by the last POSIG-UP the student attends; i.e. the POSIG-UP where the master's thesis is completed and the master's thesis defence takes place. It includes the diploma supplement (according to Article IX.3 of the Lisbon Recognition Convention from 11 April 1997) which contains a detailed overview of the student's achievements at all POSIG-UPs attended".

During on-site discussions PLUS explained that students who register their first semester at PLUS remain matriculated over their complete period of study even if the following three semesters will be spend elsewhere.

Experts' Appraisal

While the recognition of academic achievements among the partners is well regulated and transparent, the recognition of prior learning outside of higher education institutions remains a bit vague. According to the former accreditation report and to the current legislation in Austria, the recognition of formally acquired competences is possible. Typically, it is based on an evaluation of individual achievements of an applicant. It should be discussed to which extent the recognition of prior learning can be accepted by all partner universities. In contrary, recognition of academic achievements according to the Lisbon Convention takes place and all partner countries are signatories. Nevertheless, it could increase transparency if the convention and its application for recognition processes were mentioned in the consortium agreement and/or its appendices.

The experts regard the standard as *fulfilled*.

The experts like to recommend the following:

It should be made transparent that the recognition of academic achievements and the awarding of degrees in the consortium will always be based on the definitions and criteria of the Lisbon Convention. Therefore, the Lisbon Convention should be clearly named e.g. in the appendix A of the consortium agreement as reference for recognition. In addition, it should be clarified under which circumstances the recognition of prior learning at partner universities is possible.

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4.5   Learning, Teaching and Assessment

4.5.1   Learning and Teaching

The program 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.

The self-report explains that "*PoSIG is highly student centred with a consistent orientation on learning outcomes and competences and requires a high motivation of students for autonomous decisions about the academic profile they want to develop within the curriculum*". Students must decide, before starting their studies, about their individual study tracks in two fields of specialisation together with making their decision on the universitie(s) where they want to continue their studies. According to the Teaching Handbook, which is appended to the consortium agreement, studying is also based on a research guided teaching approach and supposed to involve students in discovery learning.

Generally, the program distinguished three course types:

– *Proseminar (PS) is a scientifically oriented (lower-level seminar-style) course and the prerequisite for seminars. Based on their accomplished theoretical and practical work, students will acquire foundational knowledge and abilities to engage in scientific work and research and thereby contribute actively to the class. Student performance is assessed continuously throughout the course and attendance is mandatory.*
– *Seminar (SE) is an academically advanced course. It provides in-depth knowledge in the respective subject area and encourages discussion and reflection on scientific themes through the active participation of students. Students' performance is assessed continuously throughout the course and attendance is mandatory.*
– *Exercise Course with Lecture (UV) connects the theoretical introduction to a field by teaching practical skills and drawing especially on the use of exercises. Students' performance is assessed continuously throughout the course and attendance is mandatory.*

Therefore, teaching in PoSIG is mainly conducted in the form of seminars and is focussing on active participation by making use of e.g. presentations, group discussion, teamwork, simulations (as e.g. Moot Courts) and case studies.

All partners have experience in academic exchange of staff and students. All partners offer supervising support and socialising activities at departmental level. A PoSIG Jour fixe "Internship & Field Experience" offered by the Executive Director to all students in their first year supports their adoption to the study reality. A tutor gives support regarding the technical environment and exam requirements.

The admission requirements are chosen to support teaching and learning e.g. by requesting students to take additional methodology courses if their Bachelor curriculum did not cover all modules or the required level.

The use of eLearning gradually increased during the last years and lecturers have been encouraged to make use of it. The consortium mainly uses eMail for communication. For

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eLearning purposes partners use their local eLearning environments. The original idea to make use of moodle did not work out.

The Admission Requirements for Exams (§ 11 "Curriculum") recommend a plan of study in accordance with regard to the following courses:

- the completion of the Methods I before the Methods II course,
- the completion of the course Basic Texts and one other course in the two obligatory elective modules during the first two terms of the program (to be confronted with a variety of possible topics for the master thesis),
- the completion of the master thesis seminar during the third or fourth semester, to develop a research proposal for the master thesis. The seminar will allow faculty to additionally supervise the student's research work during the thesis project.

Following these recommendations, a successful completion of modules and the program as such is facilitated.

Experts' Appraisal

The basic document defining the joint approach to teaching is the Teaching Handbook, which corresponds to appendix E to the consortium agreement. It is well appreciated that this comprehensive document functions as a guideline. Also, the Teacher Academy or annual teacher training week is a valuable tool which serves, in addition to exchanging on teaching matters, also to exchanging on research matters. It guarantees that partners get together on an annual basis and discuss not only program related issues but also topics going beyond.

The different forms of teaching seem to be diverse and adequate. Details of expected learning outcomes and teaching methods used are provided in the module descriptions. The good supervision is also illustrated by the fact that the thesis seminar, for example, is usually only held in a small group of 1 to 2 people.

An innovative example of teaching is provided with the definition of a "Seminar of Excellence". In this case the seminar is based on twin-teaching with cooperation of a guest teacher from the EU and a teacher from the Western Balkans. The consortium developed a template for this seminar and as experts welcomed the idea of team-teaching, they would like to encourage the consortium to make use of it.

The experts regard the standard as *fulfilled*.

The experts like to recommend the following:

It is recommended that documentation of selected Teaching Academy sessions be made accessible online. This could include formats such as recordings or other suitable media, shared through appropriate channels to attract new students and faculty.

4.5.2   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.

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The PoSIG Consortium applied the constructive alignment for module development which also aims for consistency between the three key elements such as intended learning outcomes, teaching and learning activities and the forms of assessment. In the Teaching Handbook constructive alignment is described as a guiding principle.

Types of assessments are diverse: they vary from classical written exams and essays over presentations to research papers.

The following aspects in regard to assessments form part of the Teaching Handbook:

- assess students not only with one single examination but with several assessments (e.g. a midterm test, presentations, participation in discussions, proof of literature studies, participation and performance in a group project; i.e. assignments). Plan to assess students continuously.
- to communicate to students the assessment methods planned from the very beginning of your class (in the online course catalogue).
- to clearly communicate how the ECTS credits of your class are allocated to single assignments/assessments
- to give students proper feedback that helps to improve their future learning.

As one module is generally assessed by different assessments, the following examples taken out of three different syllabi not only show the assessment types but also how the final module/course grade is calculated:

1)

- Short presentations 20%
- Active Participation 20 %
- Weekly review papers 60 %

2)

- Active Participation 30%
- Reaction papers 10 %
- Track option 60% (5 short papers or research paper)

3)

- Ex cathedra (exam) 30%
- In-class discussions 20 %
- Final Exam 20 %
- Group work 20 %
- Reflection papers 10 %

Details on how the Master Thesis is carried out, are provided under § 8 "Master's Thesis" and § 13 "Master's Thesis Defence" of the "Curriculum".

Even though courses and teaching in general are embedded in the context of individual partner universities, much effort was and is made to ensure that proper teaching and learning methods are applied. Teachers are trained (as QM-input during the train-the-trainer workshops in spring 2016; a so-called quality tour to all partners in spring 2017; since then repeated teaching

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academies in Salzburg) and instructed (see the teaching handbook in the annex of the partner agreement) on the specific PoSIG-teaching context. They are expected to follow the "paradigm" of constructive alignment, i.e. the adjustment of learning outcomes, assessment methods and instructions, and to plan these three elements in the mentioned sequence. The entire process of planning the curriculum, the modules and courses was designed as to begin with the writing of proper learning outcomes.

Regarding the planning of single courses, instructors are requested to make use of the compulsory form for course descriptions (syllabi). These course descriptions are the basis for the evaluation of course proposals.

Experts' Appraisal

The document called "Curriculum" regulates aspects of studying and also the examinations. Since the local examination regulations must be observed for details, the modules/courses are already very specific and even clearly show the composition of the grades by indicating the weighting of the various examinations. This is highly necessary, especially as with the change in program structure, the same module is offered at different locations. All in all, the existent regulations and additional supportive documents guarantee a consistent application of assessments and examinations at different partners. The established processes guarantee that assessments correspond with the intended learning outcomes.

The consortium noted that the examination book will be exchanged among partners before the start of the master's thesis. This informs all partners about the nature and level of achievements of the different students. Also, plagiarism checks are common at all partner universities.

The different forms of assessment are well suited to support the achievement of the intended learning outcomes. Consistency of application is ensured (as far as possible) by many agreed regulations and forms.

The expert group considers it an international standard to have two supervisors for the Master thesis. Two supervisors are considered as beneficial for students and their academic outcomes. Nevertheless, students mentioned that in some cases the approach and requirements for the development and execution of the Master thesis can be very different among two supervisors. The Master thesis and its defence are regulated in various documents. Among other things, it is defined in detail in the curriculum.

Despite existing regulations on the execution and supervision of the Master thesis, different cultures and personalities among the supervisors can in some cases lead to different requirements and focal points. The harmonization of teaching and supervision styles is likely to be a topic for ongoing discussion between the partners.

The experts regard the standard as *fulfilled*.

4.6   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.

The consortium explains that student support is the responsibility of the local partners. However, as there are specific needs, especially regarding the mobility of PoSIG-students, the PoSIG-consortium agreed on an appendix of the partner agreement that specifies the relevant requirements to be met by the single partners.

This support encompasses, among others, that hosting PoSIG partners are supposed to offer support in finding accommodation via their International Offices and that a checklist is provided of issues to be taken care of upon arrival and departure.

To get ideas for possible future career paths, students can use the Career Centre in Salzburg, and job fairs are regularly held at other university locations to attract young graduates.

The so-called "Curriculum"[5] (or study regulation) that is appended to the agreement regulates under § 12 (4) *"For students with disabilities and/or chronic illnesses, alternative examination regulations suitable for each individual case will be offered in cooperation with the relevant support units of the relevant POSIG partner university".*

Students report that they appreciated very much to make international friends during their studies. Unfortunately, alumni work is rather a weak spot of the consortium. So far, there are some Facebook and mailing list activities but no structured alumni approach. To improve on that aspect, it is intended, as first step, to make use of LinkedIn in a more professional way.

The consortium explained that the intended governance structure also included a student and alumni board. The intention was to develop a bottom-up structure. Unfortunately, due to a lack of interest, the student board did not become established.

Experts' Appraisal

All in all, student support is sufficient and functional. Very much appreciated is the orientation week at the beginning of the first semester in Salzburg. Students are generally grateful for the support they receive from coordinators at different locations because administrative issues are not always easy. This applies also to Salzburg where e.g. necessary visits at local immigration for non-EU-citizens are cumbersome when German language skills are limited.

It is observed that many support instruments and initiatives are existent. Nevertheless, students are often overwhelmed with the many tasks to fulfil after arrival at a new study place. Accordingly, attention should be paid that students have access to necessary and useful information in a concise and timely way. Good initiatives as the buddy system at PLUS were apparently not known from the very beginning when it would have been extremely helpful for dealing with visa and accommodation problems.

The experts regard the standard as *fulfilled*.

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[5] See explanation on page II-8.

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4.7   Resources

4.7.1   Staff

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

The self-documentation provides detailed information on staff. Short CVs of all teaching staff is provided as well as a PoSIG course list depicting who is teaching the obligatory modules on methodology and supervising the master thesis as well who is teaching in the five modules providing the specialisations.

It is laid out in the cooperation agreement that instructors and their courses have to comply with the following criteria in order to be accepted for the PoSIG curriculum:

- *Proof of research and/or teaching experience in the relevant field.*

- *Involvement in international activities such as staff exchange, participation in workshops and conferences.*

- *Full compliance of the course with the requirements of the PoSIG curriculum in terms of subject, teaching methodology, learning outcomes and assessment methodology/examination rules as defined in the curriculum and the PoSIG Teaching Handbook (see Appendix A and F and Article 4; ESG 1.2; ESG 1.3).*

- *Full participation in all required quality management activities and the PoSIG-UP's eLearning environments (eLearning platforms, eLibraries, plagiarism control for all student papers, ePortfolio).*

The self-documentation gives evidence on staff mobility and development.

The Teacher's Academy play an important role in this connection. Each year, different topics are discussed and the idea is to combine research results and ideas as well as teaching ambitions. The consortium claims that success is shown by publications that resulted out of this measure and by the expansion of the network. For the purpose of getting together during this Teacher's Academy, annual Erasmus funds are secured.

In addition to teaching staff, a joint program requires more staff for management and student support. The central institution for governance is the coordinators board, where each partner is represented with one academic expert. The Coordinators Board is the central policy maker regarding the joint PoSIG curriculum. It is electing one member as Executive Director who is acting in the name of the consortium. Main activities of management staff are the selection of students and collecting and compiling grades and information on students and alumni.

Experts' Appraisal

The experts have no doubts that teaching staff is adequate in terms of quantity and quality. It is not only the fact that staff is available in sufficient quantity but the efforts undertaken by the consortium that they all get regular (didactical) training and to support that they also have a sound focus on research. These requirements are even formalised, which is one of the strong

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points of the program.

It is also an advantage that the program concept is based on the integration of PoSIG students into already existing programs and modules at different locations. Thus, it allows making efficient use of existing teaching staff without requiring additional teaching resources. In contrast, additional management capacity is necessary for program implementation. That is the reason why every partner university must nominate a program coordinator who becomes part of the coordination board, which is the highest level of decision making in the governance structure of the program.

The experts regard the standard as fulfilled.

4.7.2 Facilities

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

In the self-report the consortium explains that the provision of facilities and learning resources is the responsibility of the individual consortium partners. E.g. all partners have adequate libraries. The partner agreement defines the technical infrastructure to be provided by all partners (i.e. email address, eLearning environment, plagiarism scanner).

Within the scope of the related Erasmus+ project, in 2016 the then participating Western Balkan universities (UNSA, SSST, FAMA, UBT, UET, UTIR) had the chance to buy IT equipment and various software tools (e.g. for statistical analysis). For the whole consortium, online resources, especially a political science related eLibrary and a software for anti-plagiarism, as well as an eLearning- and an ePortfolio-platform, had been acquired and implemented.

The following equipment and software were acquired for Western Balkan partners or the whole PoSIG network:

Product	Type of product	Available for …
Moodle	learning management system, eLearning-platform	all partners
Mahara	ePortfolio platform	all partners
eLibrary	Access to online libraries and online journals via EBSCO, SAGE & JStore	all partners
Turnitin	plagiarism detection	all partners
Hardware	laptops, computers, projectors, …	WB partners

During on-site discussions it was mentioned that investments went, in particular, into e-resources (e-books, e-journals). As students remain enrolled for the full-time of their studies at PLUS (even once they are at a partner university) they have continuous access to the IT environment, e.g. the e-library.

It is part of the agreement that each partner applies its regulations on participation costs (tuition fees) to all students registered in the PoSIG curriculum for the period of their active study at that institution, but not during study periods where students are attending courses at another

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partner university. The partners agreed to charge no costs for the operative management and technical support, application system, website and learning environment to the PoSIG-UPs consortium for the duration of the signed contract.

Experts' Appraisal

At the beginning of the implementation of the joint program investments were made into books, software (including anti-plagiarism software) and hardware. Discussions with students and alumni proved that they seem to be satisfied with the facilities provided. The experts noticed that some of the literature cited in the module descriptions is not always up-to-date. The consortium responded that "older" literature is usually covering general topics and methods which is considered as necessary thematic introduction. It is recommended that each individual higher education institution in POSiG ensures that there is an internal discussion at least every two to three years as to whether the literature and other sources used for teaching need to be updated.

The experts have no reason to doubt the adequacy of the given facilities at different locations.

The experts regard the standard as fulfilled.

The experts like to recommend the following:

The expert group also recommends to regularly update the literature used in classes to meet high quality academic standards.

4.8   Transparency and Documentation

Relevant information about the program 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.

The self-report covers all the criteria required by the European Approach. Many appendices support statements of the self-report and provide further evidence.

Information for the public is mainly given on the following website: https://posig.info/. This includes information on admission (https://posig.info/admissions) and the curriculum (https://posig.info/curriculum/).

An important element of transparency between university partners and individual students is the Examination Book. In fact, the Examination book is nothing else than an excel sheet but it is meant to document and share student progress: The completion of courses is registered at the respective partner and also communicated to the Executive Director, who adds these courses to the student's Examination Book.

According to statements of the consortium the certification of the joint degree starts after the student has completed his/her studies in accordance with the PoSIG curriculum by attending two to four partners. This is documented in the examination book, listing all courses and requirements the student has successfully completed.

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The joint diploma will be issued as an official legal record of award by the last partner a student has attended. It will be signed by the responsible person (rector, dean) following the regulation at each partner. Additionally, the student receives a certificate containing the logos of all partners and signed by all relevant degree signing persons of the partners the student has attended in the course of his/her PoSIG studies (Art. 5 of the Partner Agreement). This is, of course, accompanied with a diploma supplement (see appendix G of the partner agreement).

The PoSIG Executive Director is in charge of the management of this diploma issuing process. He or she will be provided with all the necessary documents and information from the PoSIG coordinators of all partners a student has attended.

The grading convention which serves as translation of the different grading systems of the participating countries can be also found online (https://posig.info/grading-system/).

Experts' Appraisal

The self-report and the documentation of the program in terms of regulations, agreements, available templates etc. is very comprehensive. It is obvious that the consortium puts lots of efforts into guaranteeing consistency between partners. All necessary aspects such as admissions, examinations, the course catalogues and mobility tracks are sufficiently described. However, the informative module catalogue is not online.

The appendix A (Curriculum) of the consortium agreement corresponds very much to a so-called study regulation and provides essential information on how to the study the joint degree program. It is therefore welcomed by the expert group that it is now publicly available on the program's website so that (prospective) students have always access to this information.

It can be summarised that all necessary information is available and even much more. In some cases, however, access to this information could be improved. This applies in particular to the website. Essential information is provided but e.g. some links between partner universities do not function properly or information is only given in local language. However, it must be taken into account that in this case the number of actors is very large, which increases the susceptibility to errors accordingly.

The experts regard the standard as *fulfilled.*

The experts like to recommend the following:

- *In order to increase the transparency of the program, it is recommended to encourage partners to regularly check and update websites or links in case of changes. This includes that the PoSIG website provides links to current examination regulations at partner universities in English language.*

- *Partners should be encouraged to make their local examination requirements available in English.*

- *It should be made transparent that the recognition of academic achievements and the awarding of degrees in the consortium will always be based on the definitions and criteria of the Lisbon Convention. Therefore, the Lisbon Convention should be clearly named e.g. in the appendix A of the consortium agreement as reference for recognition. In addition, it should be evaluated under which circumstances the recognition of prior learning is possible at partner universities.*

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4.9   Quality Assurance

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

The consortium explains the setup of the quality management as follows:

"The most important features of PoSIG QA can be summarised as follows:

- *Each partner nominates one person into the **Quality Board**.*
- *Additionally, a **Student and Alumni Board** is established.*
- *Nevertheless, the **Executive Director**, **local coordinators** and the **Coordinators Board** are key for all aspects of quality assurance. Here, in the Coordinators Board, all relevant aspects of the program and its implementation are discussed and decided on; incl. eventual quality issues.*
- *… the **Teacher Academies** must be mentioned in this regard. They play a crucial role in terms of quality assurance. Here, PoSIG teachers can deepen their connections, expand their network, start collaborations, exchange on the topics they teach, reflect on quality issues and, every year, they get an update or a reminder on the PoSIG teaching standards.*
- *The **annual meetings** of the Executive Director with local coordinators together with other representatives (like heads of departments, deans, members of the rectorate) **at their home institutions** is another crucial aspect of quality assurance.*
- *The **Quality Week** in July 2022 was intended as a starting point for the reform of the curriculum and the update of the Partner Agreement, taking into account the evaluation results mentioned below. It was also an early start for the re-accreditation process, discussing the options available (e.g. separate accreditation where necessary, further joint accreditation) and looking at the criteria for European Approach accreditation.*
- ***Course evaluation** and **workload monitoring** is the responsibility of every single partner university; local regulations are to be applied.*
- *Shortly before the Quality Week, in early July 2022, a series of **Round Table Talks**, addressed to actual students, dropouts and alumni of PoSIG was conducted. Topics discussed included motives for joining the program and whether they were fulfilled, reasons for dropping out of the program, welcome services at the attended universities, support and supervision, quality aspects of the curriculum ("studyability", contents, integration of practical perspectives, …), the quality of the teachers of the program, role, relevance, influence of peers, social integration, the management of internships, supervision during writing the master's thesis, rating of the academic and professional perspectives after finishing PoSIG, and even more. A summary of the results was reported at the Quality Week as well as to the Coordinators Board;* (see Quality Report, app. 18)
- *The **Teaching Handbook**, developed in the initial EuroPS project (2015-2017; [appendix F of the partner agreement](#)), is still the basis for the inputs during various meetings as mentioned repeatedly above. This manual contains the following topics:*
  - *elaboration of PoSIG's European Approach to higher education,*
  - *respective requirements for PoSIG-instructors,*
  - *regulations regarding module and course descriptions,*

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- the general PoSIG-didactical approach - how to teach PoSIG (especially focusing on constructive alignment),
- tips for online-collaborations, online-teaching
- various didactical scenarios as good practice to follow on.

During on-site discussions it was confirmed that the Teacher's Academy takes place once a year. The occasion is also used to combine it with annual Coordinator's board meetings and to conduct round table talks with stakeholders to gather feedback on the program. Apparently, the Coordinator's board meetings can take place also bi-annually, if needed and/or electronically.

The Coordinator's board meetings are very important to agree on admission of students and on courses to teach by different partners. The course evaluations are then carried out by individual partners.

Experts' Appraisal

With the means of the quality handbook the consortium proves that it has a policy for quality assurance. Internal stakeholders develop and implement this policy through appropriate structures and processes, while involving external stakeholders (in particular through the Teacher's Academy).

It is obvious to the expert group that the cooperation is working well and solid structures are established. Evidence of regular meetings and exchange is given by the table on page 19/20 of the self-report. It is described in the Teaching Handbook under 4.9 that partners and PoSIG instructors are supposed to regularly evaluate their courses in accordance with the regulations of their home institutions.

As course evaluations are carried out according to local regulations, it remains unclear how and when the results of these evaluations are shared. Here, a more consistent approach would be welcomed. It should be analysed in how far overarching surveys may compensate for the problem that course evaluations must follow local regulations.

The experts perceive the alumni as very valuable resource persons that should be supported to stay in contact and maybe build up a "PoSIG community". Here, activities of the PoSiG partners can be intensified: not only for the sake of the community but also for gathering feedback for continuous improvement or adaptation of the program to current needs. This means graduate surveys and activities to build up and/or strengthen the alumni network are highly welcomed. A more structured approach would help to deal with the expected increasing numbers of students and graduates.

The experts regard the standard as *fulfilled*.

The experts like to recommend the following:

- *Chapter 5 of the quality handbook should include a more formalised approach of student and graduate surveys. This should include the evaluation of the student's workload (compare chapter 4.3.3).*

- *It is highly recommended to strengthen the Alumni network. This may include strengthening the ongoing social media activities but should also go beyond. An alumni survey can also be used to gather further ideas and should be used to verify the impact of the program.*

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III Appendix
1 Schedule and Participants of the Site Visit (names deleted for publication)

III.   Appendix

1.   Schedule and Participants of the Site Visit *(names deleted for publication)*

08:30 Talks with members of the **university leadership board and coordinators/academic directors of partner universities**

Topics: *General strategy and development plan of the university, position of the program(s) in the general portfolio; future perspectives of the program from the leadership's point of view, internationalization strategy, quality assurance, equal opportunities policy etc.*

- Strategic aspects of the co-operation
- Joint development of program
- Expectations and financial sustainability of the program
- Role of degree-awarding partners and associate partners
- Infrastructure and resources
- further training & qualification of lecturers
- Joint management and quality assurance of the program

Participants:
- local coordinator, coordinator of courses renovation process, UKIM, f2f
- head of department PolSci, PLUS, f2f
- rector, UBT; online
- PoSIG executive director, PLUS, f2f
- vice rector for international affairs, PLUS, f2f
- head of international office, PLUS, f2f
- dean PolSci, UNSA; online
- quality management, PLUS, f2f

09:45   **Short Break**

10:00   **Meeting with students and graduates (employed in relevant fields)**

Topics:

- Achievement of intended learning outcomes
- Contents and structure of study programs, workload, examinationsystem, student mobility
- Counselling, support and advisory services at partner universities
- Resources and infrastructure at partner universities

- Quality assurance and student participation
- Employability/Career Paths

Participants:
- student, PLUS & UKIM, online
- alumni, PLUS & UNSA, online
- student, PLUS & UTIR, online
- student, PLUS & UNSA, online
- alumni, PLUS & UTIR, online
- alumni, PLUS & UKIM, online

11:15   **Short Break**

11:30   **Meeting with support staff** (representatives of career service, student counselling… of all main partners,…)

Topics: student support and advisory services, examination system, matriculation, student mobility, quality assurance and student participation

Participants:
- international office, UTRI
- QM and faculty management, UNSA
- QM and faculty management, UP
- registration service, PLUS
- application and registration platform, UET, online
- PoSIG executive director, PLUS
- international office, PLUS
- QM, PoSIG self-evaluation report, PLUS

12:15   **Lunch** (panel members and project managers only)

1:15 pm   Small **tour of the campus** (participants)

2:00 pm   Talks with **program managers and teaching faculty** involved in the program

Topics: *Intended Learning Outcomes, curricula, contents, teaching methods; advisory and support services for students, design and organization of exams, employment market forgraduates/career paths, internationalization*

- Mobility of staff and students
- further training & qualification of lecturers
- Examination system & (joint) student assessment
- Roles and co-operation of the partners within the network
- Quality assurance

- Career Paths

Participants:
- coordinator, UNSA, f2f
- coordinator, Syllabus Renovation Process, UKIM, f2f
- coordinator, UTIR, online)
- executive director, PLUS, f2f
- coordinator, PU, f2f
- coordinator, UTRI, online
- coordinator, UBT, online
- teacher, PLUS, f2f
- teacher, UTIR, online
- teacher, UET, online
- teacher, UP, f2f

3:30 pm **Internal Discussion of the panel members**

5 pm **Final round of talks** with the university leadership board and coordina-tors atpartner universities

Topics: _Open questions, general feedback of the expert group, further proceedings + milestones of the ac-creditation procedure_

Participants:
- coordinator, SSST, f2f
- coordinator, UKIM f2f
- coordinator, UNSA, online
- coordinator, UTIR, online
- executive director, PLUS, f2f
- coordinator, UP, f2f
- coordinator, UTIS
- coordinator, UET, online
- coordinator, UBT, online)
- QM, PoSIG self-evaluation report, PLUS

2.   Response of the Consortium to the Expert Report

Example: The consortium waives the opportunity to make further comments.