



Summary report EuroPS-Joint Master's Programme in Political Science – Integration and Governance (PoSIG)

A Consortium of cooperating Universities, led by the University of Salzburg, requested AQ Austria to conduct an external quality assurance of its Joint Degree Master's Programme in Political Science – Integration and Governance (PoSIG) in English, carrying 120 ECTS. The Consortium of PoSIG has decided with regard to external quality assurance to follow the *European Approach for Quality Assurance for Joint Programmes* (European Approach, short: EA) that has been approved by European Higher Education ministers in May 2015 in Yerevan. According to the EA cooperating institutions can select a suitable quality assurance agency from the list of EQAR-registered ones. AQ Austria is an EQAR-registered agency. By granting accreditation to joint programmes, AQ Austria confirms the compliance of the joint study programme *with Standards for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes in the EHEA (European Approach)*.

1 Accreditation decision

At its 39th meeting on 15th March 2017, the Board of AQ Austria decided to grant accreditation for a period of six years to the

EuroPS-Joint Master's Programme in Political Science – Integration and Governance (PoSIG)

The accreditation of the Joint Programme is subject to three conditions and is valid until 14th March 2023. The Joint Programme will be implemented at the hereinafter named Universities of the Consortium starting with the academic year 2017/18.

- University of Salzburg (PLUS), Austria
- University of Ljubljana (ULJU), Slovenia

- Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje (UKIM), FYROM Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
- European University of Tirana (UET), Albania
- University of Tirana (UTIR), Albania
- FAMA College (FAMA) – Prishtina, Kosovo
- University of Business and Technology (UBT) – Prishtina, Kosovo
- University of Sarajevo (UNSA), Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Sarajevo School of Science and Technology (SSST), Bosnia and Herzegovina

2 Short information on the accreditation procedure

The Consortium led by the lead partner University Salzburg, submitted an application for accreditation of the study programme in October 2016. In circular resolutions on 24th October 2016, the Board of AQ Austria passed the proposal for the members of the four-member expert panel for the review and assessment of the Joint Programme. The members of the expert panel were:

Name	Institution	Role
Dr. Jovan Teokarević	Associate Professor, University of Belgrade, Faculty of Political Sciences	Head of the expert panel Expert from academia
Prof. em. Dr. Dr. h. c. mult Reinhard Meyers	Professor of International Relations, Institute of Political Science (IfPol) at the University of Muenster (WWU)	Expert from academia
Mag. Ingrid Gössinger	Monitoring Officer, OSCE Special Monitoring Mission in Ukraine	Expert from pertinent professional field
Katharina Hechl , BA	Master's degree in Political Science: European and International Relations, Master's degree in Sociology: Social and Political Theory, University of Innsbruck	Student Expert

A site visit took place in Salzburg on 1st and 2nd December 2016, which was attended by the expert panel and a project-coordinator from AQ Austria. The Board of AQ Austria took the accreditation decision under conditions in its 39th meeting on 15th March 2017. The fulfilment of the conditions must be documented in writing until the start of the academic year 2017/18 and are subject to assessment by AQ Austria. A failure to provide evidence of the fulfilment will lead to the revocation of the certification.

3 Subject matter of the application

Name of the programme	European Political Science
Academic degree(s) awarded	University of Ljubljana – Master of Science (MSc) ¹ University of Salzburg – Master of Arts (MA) Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje - Master of Science in Political science University of Tirana – Master of Arts (MA) European University of Tirana - Master of Science (MSc) FAMA College – Master of Arts (MA) University of Business and Technology – Master of Science (MSc) University of Sarajevo – Master of Arts (MA) Sarajevo School for Science and Technology – Master of Arts (MA)
Date of introduction	1 October 2017
Regular study period	2 Years
Number of ECTS credits	120 ECTS
Full time/Part time	Full time
Tuition fees	Individual participation cost policy of the participating universities from €256.50, - up to €1.600, - per term. Public universities such as PLUS, ULju, UKIM, UTir and UNSA acting within their given legal frame for participation costs. These participation costs (tuition fee where applicable) will be charged in the active study terms by the attended university within the study track the curriculum allows and a student has decided for. Other fees are charged for registration, services and insurance purposes.
University of Salzburg (PLUS)	€745,20,- €18,70,- student union fee incl. insurance and services
University of Ljubljana (ULJU)	€1.250,00,-
Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje (UKIM)	€600,00,- €650,- degree fee
European University of Tirana (UET)	€1.250,00,-
University of Tirana (UTIR)	€500,00,-

¹ Magister politologije

FAMA College (FAMA)	€1.200,00,-
University of Business and Technology (UBT)	€750,00,-
University of Sarajevo (UNSA)	€256,50,-
Sarajevo School of Science Technology (SSST)	€1.600,00,- €400,00,- thesis fee

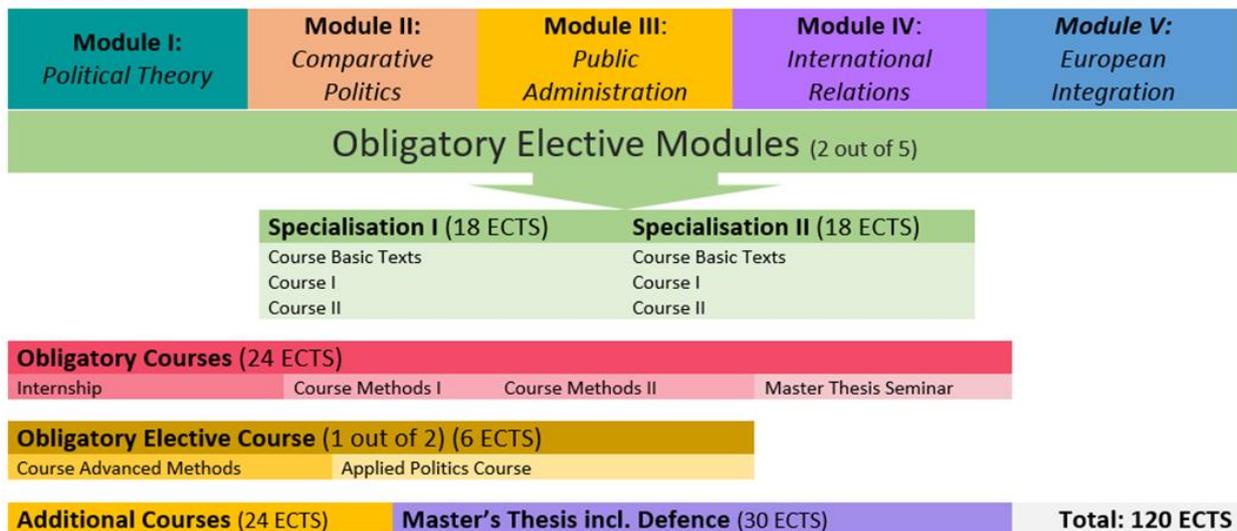
The Joint Master's programme PoSIG and all accompanying measures have been developed as part of the Erasmus+ KA2 Capacity Building Project 561485 - 2015-2017 "*Curriculum Development Joint European Political Science MA (EuroPS)*". The Project results from continuous academic exchange of staff and students within several Erasmus Mundus projects and Erasmus+ Credit Mobility. The Consortium, coordinated by the University of Salzburg (Department of Political Science and Sociology), is aiming to implement a multilateral Joint Degree (JD) for Political Science at the Master's level (120 ECTS credits) with diploma supplements for all participating project partners. According to the Consortium the joint programme, PoSiG, is based on international standards and benchmarks of teaching political science in accordance to level 7 of the European Qualification Framework and to second cycle qualification of the FQ-EHEA. Each Project Partner (EuroPS Project Partners, EUP) contributes with their specific academic profiles

PoSIG is 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 have to decide about their individual study tracks in two fields of specialization out of all fields of political science and the EUP offering these subjects during the two years of study. Based on EQF level 7 the learning outcomes prepare PoSiG graduates for qualified jobs in different fields and levels of the political systems and international relations. Following a student centred approach PoSIG-participants can decide about their individual qualification track, taking benefit from the fact that PoSIG is providing excellent education in all fields of political science and research. The key elements of this curriculum are as follows:

- Out of five two "**Obligatory Elective Modules**" (each with 18 ECTS credits) have to be selected by each student. The five modules available are: Comparative Politics, European Integration, International Relations, Public Administration and Policy, Political Theory
- Besides these modules students have to take: **Obligatory Courses** (incl. methods courses, the Master's seminar, internship; 24 ECTS credits); **Obligatory Elective Courses** (6 ECTS credits); **Additional Courses** (24 ECTS credits)
- Finally, they have to submit a **Master's thesis** incl. **Master's thesis defence** (30 ECTS credits).
- Students have to study at least one term at the Universities of Salzburg *or* Ljubljana and at least one term at the WB Universities.
- All students have to study during their **first year** in Austria or Slovenia to attend the theory guided Master's courses in the two selected modules as well as in methodology. In their **second year** they will attend one or two Western Balkan EUP

to complete their courses and their Master's thesis. Students therefore have to visit at least two EUP and a maximum of four EUP.

- Every EUP has the possibility to **suggest courses for the actual implementation** of the curriculum. Whether courses are accepted or not is decided by the *Coordinators Board* based on quality checks by the module coordinators and the EuroPS coordinator (with a specific focus on whether a course **contributes to the appropriate modules' learning outcomes**).
- Exams have to be taken based on local regulations. The conversion of grades is based on a EuroPS-grading table EUPs have agreed upon.
- The **Master's thesis** has to be written within the framework of one of the two elected modules. For each Master's thesis there will be a team of two supervisors, one from Salzburg or Ljubljana, one from a Western Balkan EUP.
- The **final exam** has the form of a Master's thesis defence. Its commission consists of examiners from all EUPs a student has attended during his/her PoSIG-studies. Examiners must also represent the two modules the student has elected.



4 Summarizing results from the assessments of the expert panel and the statement of the consortium to the report of the expert panel

The *expert panel* highly appreciated the open and constructive atmosphere experienced during the whole process with the Consortium of the Joint Master's Programme PoSiG. The expert panel was glad to learn from the documentation given by the Consortium, as well as from the interviews conducted during the site visit, and finally from the additional information provided. The expert panel experienced a Consortium highly spirited and committed to their mission. Despite of the seriousness of the Consortium's approach and a lot of its preparatory activities the expert panel concluded that the application for accreditation in line with the European Approach was premature for a number of reasons, which led to the *expert panel's assessment of standard 1.3 as not met*. The *expert panel has issued two conditions* aiming to safeguard the implementation of the Joint Master's Programme.

For the final assessment, the expert panel sought consensus in all areas of assessment, and in the decision concerning recommendations and conditions.

Standard 1: Eligibility

1.1 Status

Review Panel assessment: The standard is met.

Although the self-evaluation report (SER) itself did not provide sufficient information with regard to this standard, the expert panel received all the necessary information concerning this standard upon additional request to the Consortium supported by AQ Austria. As a result the expert panel was provided with information prior to and after the site visit addressing legal sources relevant to assess the standard referring to the status. The expert panel concluded that all participating institutions meet three basic prerequisites that allow them to participate in this Joint Programme PoSiG. All participating higher education institutions are *officially recognized and registered* by the relevant authorities in their countries; all are *entitled to participate in master programmes* leading to a *joint degree* and they are as well entitled to *issue a joint degree*, while this *degree belongs to the higher education degree systems* of the respective countries.

1.2 Joint design and delivery

Review Panel assessment: The standard is met.

The expert panel learned about many ways in which PoSiG is a *joint endeavor* of all the participating institutions. The programme has been *jointly planned* from the very beginning, including through a series of events. Events and meetings were used for the detailed planning and capacity building for and of all necessary elements of PoSiG, with the emphasis on the curriculum and the Cooperation Agreement (CA), and on quality assurance. The expert panel is convinced that the programme will be *jointly offered* to students as one coordinated and complete “package”, the elements of which are united in a harmonious way. As for the aspect the *joint delivery* of the programme, the expert panel found that it has been met, too. Although students are changing the universities during their two-year long studies, each part of their programme is an essential element of one and the same programme, run according to the same academic standards. Students have to choose their own “study track” at the very beginning, throughout all four semesters, during which two “Western” universities are in charge of the basic theoretical and methodological courses, while the Western Balkan partners are in charge of different types of courses.

1.3 Cooperation Agreement

Review Panel assessment: The standard is not met.

The expert panel has intensively discussed and analysed the comprehensive *Cooperation Agreement* document, consisting of various separate sections and different appendices. The expert panel has reviewed the multilateral programme coordination, as regulated in the Partner Agreement (PA) and concluded that PoSiG has an original and very developed system of programme coordination. It includes several bodies, such as:

Coordinators Board (CB) responsible for all academic and strategic coordination of the programme, including the recognition of courses, decision on the annual course programme,



selection of students, financial management, etc. The elected Head of the CB is the "Executive Director of PoSIG".

Quality Assurance Board (QAB) consisting of one quality manager from each partner, the QAB supervises the CB regarding the coordination of the PoSIG programme and sets the criteria for the selection of students and instructors; reviews the design and management of tools supporting high quality teaching practices and learning, evaluates the courses as well as the master's thesis supervision and all examination practices.

Student Board consists of students' representatives from each partner institution and it represents students' rights and interests.

When it comes to the issue of **financial organization**, the Consortium provided a multi-annual financial plan (in addition to the annual plan for the first cohort of students it had prepared before), with details concerning the financing of the Joint Programme from the academic year 2017/18 until the academic year 2021/22. The financing includes both tuition fees and the planned students' scholarships that the Consortium intends to apply, once the programme begins to function.

Nevertheless, the expert panel detected *the possibility of internal contradictions* between **rules and regulations** established in the PA by the Consortium itself on the one hand, and inconsistencies regarding the ones established for all Master programmes the partners might already have implemented, on the other. The expert panel is of the opinion that in its PA PoSiG has not provided clear solutions for possible situations in which its own rules and regulations might not be in harmony with the general Universities rules for the management of all of their respective MA programmes. Contradictions might occur in the area of:

- The selection and registration of students; the appointment of the Master theses supervisors and the members of the Examination Boards for the defense of the theses; the content of the diplomas.

The expert panel found out that the **mobility of students and teachers** has been dealt with in the curriculum, but is absent from the PA. The international mobility of students has to cover at least academic studies at one or two universities in Ljubljana or Salzburg in the first academic year (60 ECTS), and one or two EUPs in Sarajevo, Tirana, Skopje or Pristina in the second academic year (60 ECTS). The duration of an international mobility is at least one academic term. The expert panel concludes that student mobility is well regulated in the curriculum, but recommends the Consortium to make it part of the PA, too, together with a more detailed regulation of the teachers' mobility, and possibly of administrative staff of the participating universities, as well.

A *problem arises* due to the fact that **not all participating universities have signed or ratified the PA**. The explicit acceptance of the PA is to be considered of crucial importance, not only for the smooth functioning of the Joint Programme but also as one of the main prerequisites for the implementation itself. The expert panel is of the opinion that it is necessary to provide all signatures and finish the ratification process by all participating institutions in a very timely manner, at best until the beginning of May 2017.

Another problem arises due to the fact that **additional national accreditations** will be necessary in **most countries in which the programme is going to operate**. Even if national legislation of some countries allows external accreditation procedures for study

programmes to be conducted by a Quality Assurance Agency being a member of ENQA/EQAR, it remained unclear if and how such a possibility would be applicable for a study programme being a Joint Programme. The expert panel learned that **various administrative procedures necessary for the completion of national accreditation (recognition procedures) in order to fulfill concrete national requirements before starting a Joint Programme** will impact the scheduled start in the academic year 2017/18.

As the accreditation process for this Joint Programme might be finished only after the majority of participating institutions have undergone national procedures, and in view of the fact that signatures and ratification of the Cooperation Agreement by all participating institutions are still missing, the expert panel concludes that this standard has not been met.

The expert panel therefore concludes that it finds the Consortium application worthy of accreditation in all other aspects (with some recommendations). However, in order for this standard to be met and for this Joint Programme to be accredited and finally to be implemented the following condition and also recommendations need to be issued:

Conditions

- (1) The expert panel **conditions** the Consortium to complete the process of signing and ratification of the Partner Agreement by all partners, latest until the beginning of May 2017.
- (2) The expert panel **conditions** the Consortium to provide all relevant proofs for fulfillment of diverse national accreditation requirements, especially in those cases where full accreditation procedures are required latest until the start of the academic year 2017/18.

This is of utmost importance since the programme intends to start in the academic year 2017/18 at the University of Salzburg and at the University of Ljubljana and with the academic year 2018/19 in at least two countries of the Western Balkan partners: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and FYROM, where the programme will continue in the second year of its operation.

Recommendations

- (1) The expert panel recommends to the Consortium to further clarify whether PoSIG's own rules are in harmony with those of the participating universities in the following areas:
 - selection and registration of students,
 - the appointment of the Master theses supervisors and the members of the Examination Boards for the defense of the theses,
 - the content of the diplomas.
- (2) The expert panel recommends to the Consortium to further clarify what it would do in case its own rules are not in harmony with the rules of the participating universities.
- (3) The expert panel recommends to the Consortium to make the regulation of student mobility part of the Partner Agreement, together with the more detailed regulation of the mobility of teachers, and possibly of administrative staff of the participating universities, as well.

Standard 2: Learning Outcomes

2.1 Level [ESG 1.2]

Review Panel assessment: The standard is met.

The SER demonstrated the thorough and meticulous preparation of the application by the Consortium following widely internationally recognized benchmarks for establishing a consecutive Master in Political Science. The striven for competences in the field of study on the curriculum level, particularly those referring to comprehensive knowledge, understanding, and analysis, furthermore to sound reasoning and judgment, finally to responsive action aim at a standard very much in the forefront of the field. In contrast, methodological competences are confined to a thorough grounding in empirical-analytical political science. If it is indeed the intention of the Consortium "to offer the whole dimension of the field"; the Joint Master Programme should provide students with a larger choice of methodological options from traditional normative via historical-hermeneutic to critical-constructivist ones. The expert panel has no doubt that the POSIG programme on a general level corresponds to EQF level 7. The expert panel assumes by implication that the learning outcomes are in line with the respective national qualification frameworks of the respective partner countries.

Recommendations

- (4) The expert panel recommends that the Consortium should take responsibility to further demonstrate that Learning Outcomes align with the corresponding levels according to the respective individual national qualification frameworks.

2.2 Disciplinary field

Review Panel assessment: The standard is met.

On the curriculum level, learning outcomes follow a differentiation into knowledge, skills, and competencies implicitly, while on the module level all definitions of outcomes for the over 60 courses of the Joint Programme follow this distinction in an explicit way. This is helped by a consortium-wide benchmarking process as a result of numerous train-the-teacher-workshops. The expert panel concludes that the result of this exercise meets the requirements of EQF-level 7, thus being internationally comparable.

Students having passed the Master examinations of the program are furthermore eligible for PhD programs according to EQF-level 8; there is a firm agreement among project partners to accept applicants with these qualifications for their individual national PhD programs.

2.3 Achievement [ESG 1.2]

Review Panel assessment: The standard is met.

The achievement of the intended learning outcomes is based on a substantial *EuroPS Teaching Handbook*, ascertaining a close fit between the learning outcomes of individual courses and the modules which they belong to, as well as a constructive alignment, a close coherence between teaching strategies, assessment, and learning outcomes. In this, the Consortium is supported by a Quality Management System in developing project-wide teaching benchmarks, an e-learning platform meeting both students' and teachers' needs, an anti-plagiarism platform, an e-portfolio in which students can collect and share their work amongst colleagues, and last, but certainly not least, an e-Library making electronically

accessible the holdings of the Salzburg university library on top of the offers of a number of commercial portals. Electronic services are reliably run from Prishtina by UBT. Part of the electronic infrastructure is also the JDMS accomplishing students-, course-, and records administration, enabling the Consortium also to further develop common assessment criteria.

Another item helping to achieve the intended *learning outcome is the joint supervision* of Master theses (shared between a “Western” and a “Western Balkan” supervisor), contributing in the medium term towards an equalization of assessment criteria; ideally, this would be further enhanced if the Master these seminars could also be taught by both supervisors rather than by only the local Western Balkan one.

Standard 3: Study Programmes

3.1 Curriculum

Review Panel assessment: The standard is met.

The expert panel concludes that the Joint Programme is not just a collection of prior locally existing modules, but a highly integrated construct with a special focus on the context of the Western Balkans and their integration in (Western) European structures, based on a shared curriculum of inclusive and collaborative character. Students have to attend at least two EUPs, and can do so with the maximum of four; this should ensure the analytical knowledge, practical experience, and emphatic faculties particularly necessary for future employment in a regional, transnational, or international context. With that in mind, the panel particularly discussed the languages problem: while an excellent knowledge of English is a common entrance requirement for all, instruction in at least one of the Balkan languages (for “Western” entrants) and one of the Western languages (for “Balkan” entrants) should gain a more prominent [6 ECTS obligatory elective courses] position than the project accords it in its present form. Multilingual entrants should of course be offered the option to replace instruction in a language they know already well by an extra additional course in one of the field subjects.

A thorough in-depth examination of the 60+ courses of the curriculum reveals a preponderance of courses dealing with the analysis of political processes [or, to use political science jargon, *politics*, in contrast to institutional and normative aspects (*polity*), and content and outcome (*policy*)] – which, incidentally, squares with the methodological preference for empirical-analytical approaches already mentioned above. All this falls well in line with the praxis-orientation of the overall project outcomes – to empower, “alumni for qualified jobs in different fields and levels of the political systems and international relations”. The Consortium, in its professed endeavor to offer the whole dimension of the field might want to strengthen the number of courses dealing with problems of structure (*polity*).

Recommendations

- (5) The expert panel would recommend to the Consortium, in the interest of broadening the transdisciplinary approach of the project, to investigate and realize teaching cooperation(s) with the local Law Departments, particularly in the fields/modules of Comparative Politics (Constitutional Law, Public Law), and Public Administration (Public Law, Administrative Law).
- (6) Where there are two EUPs in the same place [Tirana, Sarajevo, Pristina], the expert panel recommends to the Consortium to investigate and realize possibilities of local

cooperation and joint teaching of courses in the search for efficient utilization of pooled resources and the reaching of the minimum number of course participants. The expert panel has been informed in the course of the site visit that such cooperation is arranged for verbally on the local level; however, it is of the opinion that written agreements should be preferred on the local and/or the Consortium level.

3.2 Credits

Review Panel assessment: The standard is met.

Within the Erasmus+ project preparing for the PoSIG application, substantial effort was dedicated not only to grasp and put into practice the ECTS 2015 guide, but a lot of training went into the use of ECTS credits as a tool for the didactic planning of individual courses. In the outcome, 18 ECTS credits were assigned to each module, 6 ECTS credits to each course, and 25 hours of workload to each credit point. The expert panel learned that the crediting of all courses with the same ECTS was to express the equal importance of the course contents delivered by the various teachers in the consortium – the expert panel stressed that this was not in line with the standard ECTS procedure, which makes the number of credits allocated to a particular course dependent on the course's workload. It was regarded as rather inconceivable that over 60 courses all have the same workload [this applies in particular to the first-year basic text courses and conceivably also to the advanced methodology ones, which seem to be much more demanding than a standard fields subject course].

Recommendation

- (7) The expert panel recommends to the consortium to allocate ECTS credit points to courses according to their actual workload. If this means that the ECTS value of a course drops below six points, the ECTS value of other courses in the same module should be examined with a view to a corresponding increase if so justified by their workload. If needs be, the number of courses in a module should be increased [e.g. 3+3+4+8 or 4+4+4+6 etc.]. The Consortium will have to insure proper student representation in this process.

3.3 Workload

Review Panel assessment: The standard is met.

The Joint Programme has an amount of 120 ECTS. Monitoring of the effective student workload as well as the time necessary for the completion of the programme (in terms of semesters needed) will be part of single course evaluations as well as of the planned student survey. As part of the course evaluation students will be asked to approximate the number of (real time) hours they needed (or in the end will have needed) to complete a specific course. The outcomes will be available to the individual teacher (as a personal feedback) as well as to the board of coordinators (to take action if needed). In the planned student survey students will generally be asked about the appropriateness of the workload calculated for courses, modules and the whole curriculum. This information will be available to the Coordinators Board (to take action if needed).

Standard 4: Admission and Recognition

4.1 Admission

Review Panel assessment: The standard is met

The PoSiG is open for graduates from political science bachelor programmes (FQ-EHEA 1st circle/EQF Level six). Accepted students must hold a BA degree in political science from a EUP or in a related field from an accredited higher education institution. BA graduates having followed curricula with less than 15 ECTS in methodology and scientific work have to compensate this with relevant courses in the field. The final decision on admission is made by the CB of PoSiG on the basis of 1) prior academic performance (final and exam grades); 2) number of ECTS obtained at the BA level; 3) candidate's score obtained during a personal interview; 4) English language proficiency (minimum B2 level and proven by a recognized language certificate e.g. FCE, TOEFL iBT etc); and 5) candidate's application form, cv, two letters of reference (at least one by an academic).

The expert panel has missed to a certain extent explicit procedures in place on how the various local admission administrators are provided with information on the PoSiG programme. A link to the local procedures concerning administration of admissions after the Coordinators Board decision is not explicitly developed.

Recommendation

- (8) The expert panel recommends the Consortium to ensure that the respective local administrations in charge of student admissions are well informed about the admission procedures and enrollment policy in place for the Joint Programme.

4.2 Recognition

Review Panel assessment: The standard is met

The necessary entrance admission level defines the recognition of prior learning within the admission process. The expert panel learned that the PoSiG decides and recognizes prior academic performance on an individual basis. The general recognition mechanism is based on international credit mobility and described in the Partner Agreement. In case candidates have a methodology background below the defined requirements they are accepted under conditions determined by the Coordinators Board.

Recommendation

- (9) The expert panel recommends the Consortium to clearly outline the recognition process, in particular with regard to possible compensation courses available at the two respective EUP (at the University of Salzburg and the University of Ljubljana) and by not later than the students have to provide proof of compensation and the necessary earned ECTS.

Standard 5: Learning, Teaching and Assessment

5.1 Learning and teaching

Review Panel assessment: The standard is met.

PoSiG is following an approach where courses and teaching are embedded in the context of each individual EUP. The Consortium has put a lot of efforts into coherent teaching methods via a series of capacity building elements. The Teaching Handbook will set in train a benchmarking process which should ensure a continuous improvement of teaching and assessment standards. Revisions of this approach are envisaged as a subject of coordinators' board planning meetings each spring. As assessment regulations are based first and foremost on local EUP regulatory standards and practice, cases may arise of a discrepancy between local and overall PoSiG assessment rules. To the expert panel's knowledge, there is no adjudication or conflict resolution mechanism for such cases. The Consortium will have to make up their mind whether they want to stick to the subsidiarity-type present situation [which might be more favorable in their relationships to local education authorities] or whether they want to centralize rule-making and rule-application on the Consortium level.

Recommendation

- (10) The expert panel recommends the Consortium to carefully analyze the impact of individual local EUP examination regulations and rules on the overall rules defined through the Partner Agreement.

5.2 Assessment of students

Review Panel assessment: The standard is met.

In the Partner Agreement and supplementing documents student selection and grading are meticulously regulated. The Consortium has set up a JDMS aiming to support administration of the Joint Programme on a central Consortium level. Again, the Consortium will have to make up their mind whether they want to stick to the subsidiarity-type situation favoring local decision-making, or whether they want to centralize rule-making and rule-application on the Consortium level.

Recommendation

- (11) The expert panel recommends the Consortium to carefully analyze whether PoSiG's rules and regulations will not cause any possible conflict with local rules and regulations of participating universities.

Standard 6: Student Support

Review Panel assessment: The standard is met.

The Consortium has agreed to give the students of the Joint Programme all rights of regular enrolled students and additionally all privileges of exchange students. In essence this means that local EUPs are responsible for providing student support, in particular the respective programme coordinators and local International Offices. However, some general guidelines applying to all EUPs are stated in the Cooperation/Partner Agreement. These guidelines determine two basic duties for EUPs, namely the aforementioned provision of student support and the organisation of student representation elections.

Regarding student support, all EUPs commit to welcome policies (information via email, duty checklist, welcome groups), assistance concerning accommodation, language courses, internship and obtainment of visa as well as the establishment of an Alumni- and Buddy-Network. Concerning student representation, the EUPs will organise a ballot for all PoSIG students to elect their student representatives. The elected representatives together form the students' board, which represents students' rights and interests in front of QA and the Coordinators' Board. Student representatives will receive travel grants by the consortium so that they are able to cooperate across borders.

The Cooperation/Partner Agreement does not elaborate on the precise duties of the EUP regarding visa obtainment and accommodation. The expert panel appreciates the inclusion of student support guidelines into the CA. Many commitments to supporting students are of an informal rather than formal nature.

Recommendation

(12) The expert panel recommends the Consortium to actively assist students with visa and accommodation issues, given the difficulties mobility students are facing in this regard.

(13) The expert panel recommends the Consortium to issue a sort of a "student handbook", specifying the rights, rules and duties of students regarding the local context of their respecting host university, in order to provide greater clarity for future students.

Standard 7: Resources

7.1 Staff

Review Panel assessment: The standard is met.

The EuroPS coordinators nominate teaching staff. The module coordinators review the alignment of course descriptions with the overall PoSIG curriculum and objectives and decide on every individual course. Finally the Coordinators Board decides on the list of accepted courses and on a sufficient and competent number of teaching staff with professional international experience. In order to develop staff competences, the programme offers train-the-trainer workshops (first one held in spring 2016), a Teaching Handbook as well as seminars of excellence. The latter are intended to be funded for EuroPS instructors for the period of around two weeks to discuss co-teaching and co-authoring of research papers as well as methodology approaches.

Recommendation

(14) The review panel recommends making a specific and transparent allocation of budget for staff development activities and scheduled valuable academic and collaborative work amongst PoSIG teaching staff, such as the train-the-trainer workshops and seminars of excellence.

Review Panel assessment: The standard is met.

The expert panel had the opportunity to look at the facilities of Salzburg University such as the library, seminar rooms, the lecture hall and offices for resident and guest lecturers. The Salzburg campus provides adequate infrastructure for teaching and learning purposes. Seminar rooms are spacious and equipped with projectors. In addition the expert panel also received a visual tour to the eLibrary with its focus on political science and a demonstration of the so-called Joint Degree Management System (JDMS) which aims to support the administration of courses, teachers, students, grades across all PoSIG stakeholders. The Consortium has committed itself to libraries with adequate access to scholarly literature including online resources (via EBSCO, SAGE and JStore), eLearning and ePortfolio platforms (Moodle, Mahara) and administrative online services (including Turnitin software for anti-plagiarism).

Recommendation

- (15) The expert panel recommends making sure that remote access to JDMS, Moodle, Mahara and in particular the eLibrary is given to all PoSIG stakeholders. This will vastly facilitate good quality of learning, research as well as communication between teaching staff and students.

Standard 8: Transparency and Documentation**Review Panel assessment: The standard is met.**

General information about the Joint Programme can be gained by browsing the Consortium's website ("www.euro-ps.org"). Future and enrolled students will find relevant information on the students' board, financial support and mobility grants, programme of recognised courses, as well as links to all the EUPs and their services. Enrolled students as well as EUP-staff will have access to the programme's eLearning platform "Moodle", which, inter alia, serves for internal communication between the EUPs, with and among students, instructors and administrators. Student progress will be documented by using the JDMS. The JDMS allows the EUPs to administer courses and staff, provide procedures and forms and to collect information at a formal level. The JDMS contains the examination book to document student progress by listing students' grades and completed courses. Students' grades will also be registered by each EUP attended. In addition to Moodle and JDMS, the Consortium is also using Mahara which is an ePortfolio software, designed for students to document their progress, experiences and achievement of learning outcomes throughout their studies.

With regard to the conduct of course evaluations, the expert panel was told during the site visit that results will not be made public to students. In the expert panel's view, these results need to be made public in order to support an environment based on trust, equality and cooperation.

Recommendation

- (16) The expert panel recommends providing additional information regarding visa requirements and accommodation issues relevant for each EUPs' local contexts to students via the consortium's website or Moodle.

(17) The expert panel recommends the Consortium to make course evaluation results transparent to students (e.g. via Moodle).

Standard 9: Quality Assurance

Review Panel assessment: The standard is met.

The Joint programme's quality management system follows the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) and has jointly developed a *Quality Management Handbook* describing relevant processes and procedures. The overall aim of the QM system is to foster a quality culture that is created and applied jointly. In order to ensure a joint understanding and application of Quality Management, each EUP needs to appoint a quality manager to the Quality Assurance Board (QAB) of the Joint Programme. The QAB meets at least once a year. As specified in the PA, the QAB has various duties, mainly supervising the CB regarding programme coordination and selection criteria for students and teachers, applying QA tools and evaluating courses. Apart from quality managers, two representatives of the student board plus the programme's Executive Director will be present at the QA Board's meetings. Furthermore the QAB will make suggestions to the CB based on evaluation data and will merge those results in annual QA reports.

The quality managers envisage several strategies to promote quality culture within the programme, such as course evaluation, student surveys (achievement of Learning Outcomes and general opinion on the programme) and teacher surveys and in future alumni surveys too. Monitoring student workload and JDMS data will provide further insights on the quality of the programme, e.g. number of courses held, attendants per course, time taken to achieve diploma etc.

Teachers will be provided with Teaching Handbook that offers information on the usage of the shared software, regulations, requirements and they will find module forms for writing course and module descriptions.

Recommendation

(18) The expert panel recommends specifying on how each of the EUPs will actively contribute quality processes following the PDCA quality cycle.

The **Consortium** submitted a **statement** to the review report and expressed its overall appreciation to the work of the expert panel. The Consortium stated that it felt well understood in its ambition to develop a new quality of multilateral joint degree collaboration within such a big consortium. The Consortium has worked jointly on the statement, the process was organised by the Executive Director of the Consortium.

In its statement the Consortium referred to the unexpected challenges regarding the implementation of the European Approach after Yerevan 2015. The Consortium emphasises that the experiences gained might also lead to conclusions for the further development of the EA and its practicability. The Consortium provided its feedback in particular to the standard assessed as not met and to standards with recommendations. The Consortium expresses the *full acceptance of the conditions presented*. With regard to the second condition it needs to be addressed that the Consortium divides the timeline of fulfilment into two parts. It reads the following

"Regarding the time plan for the national accreditation and implementation of the PoSIG curriculum the AQ expert panel defined to fulfil these conditions latest until the start of the academic year

- 2017/18 by the Universities of Salzburg and Ljubljana.
- 2018/19 by the other EUP at Western Balkan.

*The **Consortium is fully accepting this condition** for the participation of single member of the consortium." (Statement of the Consortium, p. 2)*

AQ Austria has intensively discussed the statement submitted by the Consortium and concedes that one cannot rule out the possibility that the interpretation of the Condition by the Consortium occurs from a presentation in the expert panel report. The particular condition is followed by an explanation, which can lead to the understanding that the fulfilment can be read two-tiered. This indeed reflects to the two-tiered process of curriculum implementation (course of studies). According to the Joint Programme students have to start their first semester only at PLUS or UJj. Therefore an implementation of the accreditation decision/national accreditation could be prioritized for the Austrian partner and for the Slovenian partner with the academic year 2017/18, while for all others it could be 2018/19. Hence, concerning the decision finding discussion of the expert panel, the focus laid "(...) until the start of the academic year 2017/18". (See Review Report, page 19).

The **Consortium** agrees with the **recommendations** issued. The Consortium stated that it has already started with discussions for implementation etc. In addition the Consortium explains that it is planning to apply for a continuing Erasmus+ capacity building project. Such a project, Quality Assurance of multilateral Joint Degrees - QAmuJD project, should support sustainable implementation of recommendations issued.

5 Decision of the AQ Austria Board

The Board of AQ Austria decided in its 39th meeting on 15th March 2017 to grant accreditation for a period of six years to the *EuroPS-Joint Master's Programme in Political Science – Integration and Governance (PoSIG)*. The accreditation of the Joint Programme is subject to three conditions and is valid until 14th March 2023. The fulfilment of the conditions must be documented in writing *until the start of the academic year 2017/18* and are subject to assessment by AQ Austria. A failure to provide evidence of the fulfilment will lead to the revocation of the certification.

The Board of AQ Austria based its **decision** on the self-evaluation report and supporting documents submitted by the Consortium, the review report of the expert panel and the formal statement provided by the Consortium partners of the Joint Degree Master's Programme.

The expert panel proposed to the Board of AQ Austria two conditions, which were confirmed by the Board. The Board of AQ Austria decided to grant accreditation to the Joint Degree Master's Programme for a period of six years, subject to three conditions.

The two conditions proposed by the expert panel are necessary because the respective standard *1.3. Cooperation Agreement* is assessed as not met. With regard to a *third condition* the Board of AQ Austria, deviating from the expert panel's opinion assessed standard *3.2 Credits* **as not met**, which led to the issuance of a condition instead of a recommendation which was proposed for the standard by the expert panel.

The three conditions formulated are aiming to *safeguard the implementation of the Joint Master's Programme PoSiG*.

Conditions that apply to the Joint Master's Programme:

Condition 1: The Consortium needs to complete the process of signing and ratification of the Partner Agreement by all partners in the Consortium until the start of the academic year 2017/18.

Condition 2: The Consortium needs to proof the fulfilment of all national accreditation requirements of all partners in the Consortium, especially in those cases where full accreditation procedures are required latest until the start of the academic year 2017/18.

Condition 3: The Consortium needs to allocate ECTS credit points to courses according to their actual workload. If this means that the ECTS value of a course drops below six points, the ECTS value of other courses in the same module (18 ECTS) should be examined with a view to a corresponding increase if so justified by their workload.

The fulfilment of these conditions must be documented in writing until the start of the academic year 2017/18 and are subject to assessment by AQ Austria. In case of non-fulfilment, the accreditation of the Joint Master's Programme in Political Science – Integration and Governance (PoSIG) will be withdrawn immediately.



Furthermore, the Board of AQ Austria suggests the Consortium to consider the following **recommendations**. The recommendations proposed by the expert panel and supported - with minor restatements - by the Board of AQ Austria are aiming *to support the further development of the Joint Master's Programme*:

- (1) The Consortium should further clarify whether PoSIG's own rules are in harmony with those of the participating universities in the following areas:
 - selection and registration of students,
 - the appointment of the Master theses supervisors and the members of the Examination Boards for the defense of the theses,
 - the content of the diplomas.
- (2) The Consortium should further clarify what it would do in case its own rules are not in harmony with the rules of the participating universities.
- (3) The Consortium should make the regulation of student mobility part of the Partner Agreement, together with a more detailed regulation of the mobility of teachers, and possibly of administrative staff of the participating universities, as well.
- (4) The Consortium should take responsibility to further demonstrate that Learning Outcomes align with the corresponding levels according to the respective individual national qualification frameworks.
- (5) The Consortium should, in the interest of broadening the transdisciplinary approach of the project, investigate and realize teaching cooperation(s) with the local Law Departments, particularly in the fields/modules of Comparative Politics (Constitutional Law, Public Law), and Public Administration (Public Law, Administrative Law).
- (6) The Consortium should investigate and realize possibilities of local cooperation and joint teaching of courses in the search for efficient utilization of pooled resources and the reaching of the minimum number of course participants especially cases were two EUPs are in the same place [Tirana, Sarajevo, and Pristina]. Written agreements should be preferred on the local and/or the Consortium level.
- (7) The Consortium should ensure that the respective local administrations in charge of student admissions are well informed about the admission procedures and enrollment policy in place for the Joint Programme.
- (8) The Consortium should clearly outline the recognition process, in particular with regard to possible compensation courses available at the two respective EUP (at the University of Salzburg and the University of Ljubljana) and the necessary earned ECTS credit points.
- (9) The Consortium should carefully analyze the impact of individual local EUP examination regulations and rules on the overall defined through the Partner Agreement.
- (10) The Consortium should carefully analyze whether PoSiG's rules and regulations will not cause any possible conflict with local rules and regulations of participating universities.



- (11) The Consortium should actively assist students with visa and accommodation issues, given the difficulties mobility students are facing in this regard.
- (12) The Consortium should issue a sort of a "student handbook", specifying the rights, rules and duties of students regarding the local context of their respecting host university, in order to provide greater clarity for future students.
- (13) The Consortium should provide additional information regarding visa requirements and accommodation issues relevant for each EUPs' local contexts to students via the consortium's website or Moodle.
- (14) The Consortium should make a specific and transparent allocation of budget for staff development activities and scheduled valuable academic and collaborative work amongst PoSIG teaching staff, such as the train-the-trainer workshops and seminars of excellence.
- (15) The Consortium should assure that remote access to JDMS, Moodle, Mahara and in particular the eLibrary is given to all PoSIG stakeholders.
- (16) The Consortium should make course evaluation results transparent to students (e.g. via Moodle).
- (17) The Consortium should specify on how each of the EUPs will actively contribute to quality processes following the PDCA quality cycle.

6 Annex

- Review report of the expert panel as of February 2017
- Formal statement by the Consortium as of February 2017