



Deliverable title:	Quality assurance guidelines and rules to develop joint learning activities and programmes
Deliverable number:	D1.8
University in charge:	University of Louvain
Type	Output
Dissemination level	Public
Status:	Final / Draft
Annexes	Circle U. quality assurance policy for education and training

01. Contribution to the overall project

When developing a quality assurance policy for education and training within the alliance, we decided to start with the expertise at each institution to establish a common ground. One expert from each institution in the alliance has cooperated in a task force led by the UC Louvain.

This note sets out a general framework which is largely inspired by European texts and doctrine. It has been important to determine the joint values for quality assurance that are shared between all institutions in the alliance. As the alliance's joint activities go forward, more concrete and practical routines for quality assurance will be developed and agreed upon, based on the distribution of responsibility which is proposed in the quality assurance policy.

One of the major challenges of the task force has been to discuss a quality assurance system within Circle U. for teaching activities that are not yet implemented in the institutions (joint programmes and courses, summer schools etc.). Further, the task force has kept in mind the ambition of a proportionate workload between the institutions when it comes to quality assurance. An important part of the work has therefore been to define the scope of the quality assurance policy, and in this phase, the task force proposes to limit the scope to the joint activities envisaged in the project period.

02. Communication & dissemination

The quality assurance policy is a cross-cutting issue within the Circle U alliance. This theme can be found in several activities that Circle U. wishes to develop, such as summer schools, blended learning and of course in the context of academic chairs. The members of the task force will have to meet the other members of the task forces concerned with quality assurance in order to present the work carried out. These meetings will also be an opportunity to focus on the more specific challenges inherent to Circle U.

The quality assurance policy will be shared with colleagues who develop joint learning education and training activities, as well as with colleagues who are responsible for the quality assurance of joint courses, programmes and summer schools. The members of the task force will contribute to this at their own institution.

The quality assurance policy will be used in close collaboration with each institution's existing schemes for quality assurance. The task force has placed great emphasis on the guidelines not leading to unnecessary additional work at the institutions, and this condition should also be clearly communicated.

When finalised, the joint quality assurance documents will be translated into the languages of the alliance.

03. Relevant documents and links

Cf. the quality assurance policy for education and training.

Circle U. quality assurance policy for education and training

Introduction

The Circle U. approach to quality assurance should help to ensure high quality education and a good learning and working environment for students and employees. The approach to quality assurance should support the alliance's unique opportunities to connect education and research and utilise its broad academic strengths.

This document presents Circle U.'s quality assurance policy for education and training. It covers joint learning activities aimed at ensuring and improving the quality of its teaching and training, both from the point of view of students and teaching professionals (members of the academic, scientific and administrative staff).

Scope

According to the application and the grant agreement, the Circle U. institutions aim at establishing the following educational activities within the project period:

- Six joint and interdisciplinary summer schools
- 15 joint courses/programmes
- Circle U. Open School of Public Governance
- A continuous professional micro-credential development programme within Public Governance

These activities constitute the scope of this first version of the quality assurance policy. The general principles set out below will be specified as soon as Circle U.'s academic collaborations are officially established.

As the collaboration between the institutions is expanded and deepened, we will learn from the quality assurance activities during the project period and expand the quality assurance framework correspondingly. This document should therefore be considered as a living resource.

Definitions

The European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education proposes the following definition of quality for European higher education:

"Quality in higher education is a description of the effectiveness of all that is undertaken to ensure that students involved in their studies can derive maximum benefit from the educational opportunities available to them and thus meet the requirements for the degrees they seek"¹.

A distinction should also be made between the concepts of quality assurance, evaluation and quality culture. As far as quality assurance is concerned, it refers to processes for ensuring quality in a regulatory function in support of steering. As Rege Colet (2010) explains, *"quality assurance refers to processes that aim to evaluate, monitor, control, maintain or improve the quality of training*

¹ ENQA. (2004). Rapport au Président de la République, Comité National d'évaluation, Paris, 2000-2004

*programmes or institutions of higher education. They essentially have a regulatory function in the service of institutional management"*².

In the fitness for purpose approach, quality assurance aims to identify the extent to which the defined objectives of an institution, a study programme or a training scheme are achieved. Evaluation is a process of measurement, observation and reflection which must involve the stakeholders. However, it is not an end in itself but "*the privileged means to support the development of the institution in all its missions*" (Rege Colet, 2010)³.

As the author points out, "*Quality is not an intrinsic property of education or training that can be adequately measured*". The meaning given to evaluation is built collegially around shared values. This contributes to the development of a quality culture which "*is a shared value that is a collective responsibility*" (Lanarès, 2009)⁴.

Common values for quality assurance

The Circle U. institutions share a number of values when it comes to the design of quality assurance processes, based on a long-standing commitment to cooperate across Europe through the Bologna tools. These include the following:

- The approach to quality assurance should keep as close as possible to the academic meeting, i.e., the meeting between the students and the teachers in the teaching situation.
- The approach to quality assurance should take into account the multitude of disciplinary and organizational needs, both within each institution and across the alliance.
- Student participation is essential, but the quality assurance procedures should be responsive towards the different student cultures across the alliance.
- The approach to quality assurance should be based on up-to-date academic and educational knowledge, building on a broad knowledge base that includes both qualitative and quantitative information and research and development activities.
- All quality assurance procedures should focus on quality development and be enhancement-led.

The Circle U. institutions agree on certain key areas that will form an important part of the quality assurance procedures to be developed. Depending on the specific joint learning activities, the procedures should address the following:

- the design and coherence of the programme
- the design of the teaching process
- the capacity and competence of the academic staff
- the capacity and competence of the administrative staff
- the syllabus/teaching literature

² Rege Colet, N. (2010). L'évaluation à l'épreuve d'un dispositif d'académisation de la formation des enseignants. *Actes du congrès de l'Actualité de la recherche en éducation et en formation (AREF)*, Université de Genève, septembre 2010.

³ Ibidem

⁴ Lanarès, J. (2009). L'évaluation-conseil dans l'enseignement universitaire en Suisse : quelle contribution à la qualité ? In V. Bedin (Ed.), *L'évaluation à l'université. Evaluer ou conseiller ?* (pp. 211-227). Rennes : Presses Universitaires de Rennes

- available resources (classrooms/equipment, library facilities, student welfare facilities etc.)
- the mobility schemes
- cooperation with society and business
- financing of the programme/course/summer school
- monitoring and management of the programme/course/summer school

Guidelines and rules

The European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes will function as the basis of the alliance's quality assurance work. However, the approach should be sufficiently flexible to be well integrated into the existing procedures at each institution. The approach should also take into account the different legal contexts of each institution.

A joint study programme is a study programme for obtaining all forms of joint degrees that are organized and carried out by several higher education institutions with the status of a legal entity. Through joint study programme one can obtain a joint diploma, double (two) diplomas, or one diploma issued by an institution determined by mutual agreement of participating institutions

For the approval of joint study programmes, courses and summer schools, the following guidelines should apply within the Circle U. alliance:

- Approval of joint programmes should be dealt with on a case by case basis, depending on the partners and accreditation systems that are involved.
- Approval of courses should be done by the institution which is responsible for the course. The other institutions will recognize the courses in their own programmes.
- Summer schools should be assigned to one of the institutions in the alliance and approved by this institution. The other institutions will recognize the courses in their own programmes.

For the quality assurance of joint study programmes, courses and summer schools, the following guidelines should apply within the Circle U. alliance:

- Quality assurance of joint programmes should be dealt with on a case by case basis, based on the European approach to quality assurance of joint programmes, but with respect to country-specific regulations to which partners may be bound.
- Quality assurance of courses and summer schools should be conducted by the responsible institution, based on the common values outlined in this document.
- The Circle U. questionnaire should be used in addition to or instead of the regular process of collecting feedback from the students involved in a joint course or a summer school.

Furthermore, the Circle U. institutions will develop practical mechanisms for giving input and sharing results between the involved institutions.