FILMEU

WP 9 QUALITY ASSURANCE

D 9.2 – FilmEU Quality Assurance Framework

Prepared in partnership with:

A Framework for quality practices for FilmEU

Foreword

The intention of the FilmEu project reflects the stated intention within the draft EU Council recommendations (2022) regarding joint provision, namely, to develop stronger cooperation between diverse higher education institutions. One of FilmEu's intentions is to provide joint programmes across different countries in the areas of Film and Media Arts. To achieve that aim consideration must be given to the issue of quality assurance and the development of a jointly agreed internal and external quality framework across all partners.

The intention of this project is to produce a Quality Assurance Framework and provide key elements necessary for a joint validation process for the proposed FilmEU joint programmes. It is recognised that different countries have different processes and regulations. The document is not intended to be prescriptive but is based on ESG regulations and is intended to outline the key elements necessary to formulate a framework that is in accordance with ESG standards. Individual institutions must ensure that the framework that is adopted by them is in line with their own national regulations. The draft EU Council recommendations reference the enabling of higher education institutions to test the feasibility of setting-up a legal statute for alliances of higher education institutions, such as the European Universities. The draft guidelines also encourage and make it easier for higher education institutions engaged in transnational cooperation to provide joint programmes and award joint degrees and in this context facilitate the delivery at national level of a joint European degree, including the link to their National Qualifications Frameworks.

Table of Contents

Section 1 Development of a QA Framework for the FilmEu programme

1.0 Introduction

The FilmEU Work Package 9 (WP 9) has set out the objective of developing an external joint quality assurance framework and programme review and validation documentation for proposed FilmEU programmes. WP 9 states that "the main objective of the task is to produce guidelines for processes and quality assurance procedures in FilmEU, define indicators (KPI)/results and design the overall quality review process for FilmEU, all of them aligned with the ESG and EQ-Arts standards".

Emphasis is placed on the enhancement of a student learning experience that supports students to become creative mediators in today's rapidly changing societies and art communities. This is achieved in several ways including but not limited to.

- The centrality of student feedback and involvement in internal quality assurance bodies and processes within an institution.
- The inclusion of student representatives in formal external review processes

The intention is to develop a joint quality governance structure that will implement cooperatively designed policies and action plans to increase the profile and comparability of film and media arts education, innovation, and research. FilmEU is also proposing to develop a joint agreed programme validation process that will avoid the necessity of all partners having to validate their own programmes within their own countries.

It is acknowledged by those involved in the design and development of joint programmes that the accreditation and quality assurance of joint programmes is a challenge for both the higher education institutions and the quality assurance agencies. The main apparent difficulty is the fact that the programme is organised by higher education institutions from different higher education systems, and that each of these systems have their own systems of quality assurance. "This situation creates an issue for joint programmes that need to meet all the expectations arising from these different (and sometimes contradictory) national contexts and legal requirements" (European Court of Auditors (ECA) 2013).

The EQ-Arts project in partnership with the FilmEU partners and the work of the WP9 group aims to support the accreditation of joint programmes through a single procedure, to develop an assessment methodology intended to replace the regular assessment frameworks of

(national) accreditation bodies. Developed based on ECA principles on accreditation of joint programmes (ECA, 2007), this methodology aims to lead towards multiple accreditation decisions in all relevant countries based on one initial evaluation procedure and accreditation document (ECA, 2014). To achieve multiple accreditation consideration needs to be given to the alignment of internal and external quality assurance frameworks and deciding which elements need to be synchronised across the partners.

This document is intended to support those agencies and institutions involved in the design and/or accreditation of European Qualification Framework (EQF) Level 7 2nd cycle degrees, leading to a master's level award within the Bologna process.

It is directed towards the design and delivery of programmes in the art and design sector[1] and specifically film and media arts, where there still is a major under-provision across the European Union (EU). Principles of quality assurance are largely generic although it is recognised that the specificity of programmes in the arts is a factor in the development of the quality framework. This is particularly relevant in considering the quality of practice and the industry-based elements and relationships within arts-based programmes and research.

The purpose of this document is to help contextualise the key characteristics and content of a framework for a joint programme within the differing requirements of national accreditation systems and qualifications frameworks across Europe.

2.0 Relationship of a joint Quality Framework to Legislation

Each Higher Education Institution is responsible for meeting the regulatory and legal requirements placed upon it by, for example, its own government, educational ministry, national accreditation agency or funding body. This document does not set out to interpret country-specific regulatory or legal requirements, nor does it include any such requirements. The ultimate responsibility for academic standards will always remain with the Higher Education Institution that is designing and/or delivering a master's level programme,

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[1] The arts and design disciplines include architecture, dance, the design fields, film, the fine arts, media, music, photography, theatre, etc.

In using this document to help inform the design, delivery or review of programmes, higher education providers may need to refer to other benchmark statements alongside this one. These may include requirements set out by, for example, professional, statutory, and regulatory bodies or take account of employer or industry expectations. The inclusion and role of industry and sector stakeholders in elements of both internal and external quality assurance is a key factor here.

3.0 Context of a Quality Framework

According to the ESG quality is a result of the interaction between teachers, students' external stakeholders and the institutional learning environment. Quality assurance should ensure a learning environment in which the content of programmes, learning opportunities and facilities are fit for purpose. At the heart of all quality assurance activities are the twin purposes of accountability and enhancement. ("ESG - European University Association (EUA)") In some cases, and in some countries ranking can also be a purpose of the QA. The EUA state that a successfully implemented quality assurance system will provide information to assure the higher education institution and the public of the quality of the higher education institution's activities (accountability) as well as provide advice and recommendations on how it might improve what it is doing (enhancement). Furthermore, it can show how different institutions can be placed towards each other (ranking). Quality assurance and quality enhancement are inter-related and can support the development of a quality culture that is embraced by all, from the students and academic staff to the institutional leadership and management.

A comprehensive Quality Framework is underpinned by the assumption that there is always scope for further enhancement and that all processes will aim to continually improve the student learning experience. Equality, Diversity & Inclusion will be central tenets of the quality framework and will be reflected in the processes and procedures. Independent external review and benchmarking against national and international standards will be an essential element in the joint Quality Framework. The Quality Framework will encourage and support pedagogical innovation, while recognising the uniqueness and context of disciplines, programmes, and students.

4.0 Developing a Quality Framework

There are a number of key principles that make up a joint Quality Framework.

- A commitment across all partners to the ongoing enhancement of quality
- A commitment to pedagogical innovation,
- A recognition of the uniqueness and context of disciplines, programmes, and students
- A commitment to transparency between partners

- All institutions must involve the participation of internal and external peers/experts and stakeholders in its IQA and EQA processes
- All institution's mission, strategic plan, and policies for learning & teaching and research effectively align with, and are developed and enhanced by, its policy for quality assurance that actively fosters a quality culture.
- Outcomes of the application of the institution's QA policy are used to inform and develop the institution's future mission, strategic plan, and policies
- The QA framework and policy are designed to foster a cross institution-wide quality culture that promotes continuous development and enhancement as well as innovation in cooperation with the Film sector
- The institution's mission, strategic plan and policies respond to, and impact upon, the Film sector and societal needs locally, nationally, and internationally
- The institution uses an appropriate set of qualitative and quantitative indicators, such as key performance indicators (KPIs), to critically evaluate, accurately measure and monitor its progress towards the realisation of its strategic objectives
- Institutions should have a policy for quality assurance that is public and forms part of their strategic management. Internal stakeholders should develop and implement this policy through appropriate structures processes and procedures while involving external stakeholders.
- Institutions should have processes for the design and approval of their programmes. The programmes should be designed so that they meet the objectives set for them, including the intended learning outcomes.

- Clear procedures for making changes to improve existing programmes are agreed upon and carried our regularly.

- The qualification resulting from a programme should be clearly specified and communicated and refer to the correct level of the national qualifications framework for higher education and, consequently, to the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area.

- There should be regular monitoring of programmes and services.

- The framework will assure the quality of the total student experience, require good practice in all aspects of student learning, and foster and support a student-centred learning environment.

- Quality assurance processes and procedures will be transparent, evidence-based and objective, and will rigorously interrogate academic standards and identify best practice and improvement.

- The involvement of all stakeholders in the quality assurance system is important, the student voice and external peer involvement are critical elements of the quality framework, and the interests of the professions, employers and society more generally will inform the quality framework.

- The Quality Framework will ensure the partnership is agile and can respond to the needs of internal and external stakeholders, such as students, staff, industry, and society in a timely, flexible, and robust manner.

5.0 Policy Synchronisation

Policies and procedures within a Quality Assurance Framework can be described at three levels:

1. Level 1 are those policies and procedures that are required in the QAF for each partner and should be addressed in in the same way in each institution (as far as programmes of FilmEU are concerned): same content, same procedures, same stakeholders involved.

2. Level 2 is where every partner should provide the documentation, but procedures or levels can differ, depending upon the institutions Quality and campus-, institutional

and/or national context and regulations. For example, the topic of exploring student satisfaction, policies on plagiarism and academic integrity and connection to industry.

3. Level 3 consists of the polies and processes that can be added by each partner depending upon the specifics of the partner, policy of their institution and specifics of their own Quality culture.

In addition, partners also must agree how internal and self-organised external regular reviews or monitoring takes place. e.g., which bodies should be involved, internally and externally, what information should a programme provide to give review panels sufficient information, and importantly what is the format of the joint Self Evaluation Report (SER) and the review process.

6.0 Policies and Procedures

As referred to above the QA framework will be underpinned by a range of agreed policy and procedures relating to quality, these will include.

- Collaboration agreements and memoranda of understanding
- New programme development and approval procedures
- Joint validation documents
- Joint procedures for monitoring and review of quality
- Join procedures for feedback and consultation on quality
- An agreed Quality Manual

In addition to the above each provider in the partnership will have a set of policies and procedures that support the Quality Framework. These need to be agreed by the partner institutions, e.g., decisions need to be made as to what need to be common procedures, which can be similar, and which can be different in the individual institutions. Examples of Quality Assurance related procedures that need to be in common and be reflected within the Quality manual include.

- Admissions procedures
- Assessment procedures and regulations
- Assessment's appeals processes

- Complaint's policy

- Deferral procedures

- Disability supports and reasonable accommodation

- Disciplinary procedures

- Equality diversity and inclusion policy

- Ethics policy

- External examiners procedures

- Procedures for review of collaborative and transnational agreement

- Procedures for external review and validation

It is accepted that not all policies and procedures will be agreed and standardized, there will be some variations according to institution. For example, some European institutions have different policies for the accreditation of prior learning which may not be possible or desirable to standardize.

7.0 Regular Internal and (self-organised) External Review

Regular internal review processes refer to the ongoing institutional review mechanisms used to design develop and quality assure programmes. These are carried out by the institution and may include both internal and external elements e.g., the involvement of industry stakeholders in reviews. This can be classified as those that occur on a regular basis, an annual basis, or a periodic basis. External in this context refers to the statutory requirements of an individua country quality agency or government which may or may not be delegated to the institution, an example including a requirement to review the programmes every number of years. These are more likely to occur on a on a periodic basis. Examples of these reviews and processes re outlined below, this is not an exhaustive list as individual institutions and jurisdictions will have additions to these.

Regular	Annual	Periodic

Module design and approval	Programme board/councils	External Programme Reviews and Evaluation
Programme design and approval	External examiners reports (where this process exists)	Support / administration service reviews
Individual Student feedback processes	Programme review	Review of taught collaborative / transnational agreements
Student representation and feedback	For example: annual reflection on results of programme policy and action plan	Thematic reviews
Assessment policy and procedures		Professional or statutory body accreditation
Staff feedback		Programme accreditation and validation
Stakeholder e.g., industry feedback		Institutional reviews
Graduate employability surveys		

Section 2 Principles of a Joint Validation of a Programme

1.0 Introduction

The intention to produce a single validation document for the partnership to avoid duplication of accreditation validation procedures.

A proposal for the validation of a joint programme should demonstrate how it interprets and delivers the learning outcomes set out in recognised qualifications frameworks at masters' level. In this respect, the following two qualifications frameworks will frame the learning outcomes expected of European awards:

  i.   The Framework of Qualifications for the European Higher Education Area,[2]
  ii.   The European Qualifications Framework (EQF).[3]

2.0. Programme Evaluation and Validation:

The evaluation of the programme proposal leading to validation involves a review of the standards proposed for the award by a peer review panel. The panel considers the appropriateness of those standards to the award title and, secondly, considers the means suggested (in terms of teaching, learning and assessment, as well as in terms of programme structure and organisation) by which these standards are to be met and assured. The panel also considers the programme management arrangements proposed and how the programme is to be resourced.

A set of agreed standards will be in place across the partners, with an outlined; process for the; production of an SER makeup of the international panel and providers for review and validation clearly outlined

The elements a transnational validation document at master's level should include are.

a. Rationale for the Programme

This should include detail on the relationship with existing provision as well as information on prospective learner groups and on the strategic context out of which the programme emerges.

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[2]http://ecahe.eu/w/index.php/Framework_for_Qualifications_of_the_European_Higher_Education_Area#Third_cycle_-_PhD .
[3] https://europa.eu/europass/en/european-qualifications-framework-eqf

b. Alignment with Vision and Mission of individual institutions

c. Description of the Programme and Award:

Description of the award proposed and status of that award for each partner.

d. Description of the relationship between the award and relevant professional regulatory and/or statutory body(ies)

Where relevant, reference must be made to professional body recognition of the award, if appropriate, and, if the programme is recognised or QA of collaborative programmes, incl. transnational programmes & Joint Awards statutorily regulated in all relevant jurisdictions, by relevant quality assurance bodies, Ministries or Education, and other relevant authorities.

e. Agreements

Details should be provided on the agreements informing the proposal, specifically the Consortium of partnership Agreement. The Joint Awarding Agreement should also be included here if relevant. These agreements will provide detailed information on the quality assurance and monitoring and review infrastructure for the programme. It should be noted that bespoke quality assurance procedures developed for consortiums, as well as the body of academic regulations agreed as applying to any collaborative programmes, will replace the quality manuals (and other documents where academic regulations are indicated) of the institutions involved in the partnership unless otherwise specified. Therefore, bespoke quality assurance manuals for consortiums will need to be comprehensive, detailed and included in the agreements in full. Procedures must include procedures for periodic review and potential revalidation; standard monitoring and periodic review mechanisms may not be appropriate for collaborative provision.

f. Curriculum

- **Aims and learning outcomes:**

The programme should be designed and delivered to meet the specific objectives and learning outcomes and to foster student centred approaches to learning and assessment. Details should be given on the aims and minimum intended learning outcomes for the programme and for each stage of the programme if appropriate and for all constituent modules. These

Minimum Intended Learning Outcomes (MILOs) should be aligned to relevant national standards. In the case of joint awards all applicable standards must be simultaneously satisfied, that is, the highest standard requirement must be met in every respect. The exercise in agreeing Minimum Intended Programme Learning Outcomes (MIPLOs) in the case of joint awards should be referenced here and there should be detailed information on the MIPLOS as an expression of agreed standards.

- **Entry Requirements:**

These should be set out in detail. Particular attention should be paid to establishing the equivalence of international qualifications in the case of transnational collaborative programmes

- **Programme schedules:**

These should appear in a standard agreed format so that students taking modules at different institutions are clear on the schedules involved.

- **Teaching, learning and assessment approaches:**

Of particular interest here will be the delivery arrangements which should be very clearly specified. Where off-site delivery is involved, this should be stated, and the operational arrangements fully described. The general approach to teaching, learning and assessment should be described, particularly the approach to dealing with mixed cohorts of students. Details on the assessment in place for individual modules should be given in the module descriptors.

- **Assessment strategy and schedule:**

Arising from the above, the proposal should contain a detailed description of the strategy for assessment, aligning assessment instruments with learning outcomes, both at module and programme level, and a schedule of assessments setting out the expectations from students linked to a published calendar, Agreement on the assessment process criteria and outcomes is important in ensuring the validity of a joint programme. Institutions must have in place processes to accept assessment grades awarded in other partner institutions.

- **Module syllabi:**

These should be clear and accessible and should be presented in an agreed format across all partners.

- **Progression opportunities and transfer pathways including mobility arrangements between partners**

This should outline the methodologies in place for exchange and transfer in an accessible and transparent manner

3.0 Public Information and Information to Students

Consistent with the requirements relating to student rights, the proposal should set out plans for communicating information about the programme to the public and to students. Included here should be procedures for applying for entry to the programme. A programme handbook is required that includes detailed information on all aspects of the programme. It is usual also that an induction programme forms part of the accompanying programme documentation.

4.0 Arrangements for Programme Administration and Management

With a collaborative programme it is desirable that there is a joint administrative team comprising members from each party in the collaboration. This team is responsible for the direction of programme strategy and operations and agrees a resource plan for the programme, the plans for student recruitment, and the deployment of staff. The arrangements for meetings, the recording of discussions and decisions, communication amongst peers, amongst other things, should be set out in the proposal document.

5.0 Programme Regulations

A statement identifying the regulations that will apply to the programme should be outlined here. It is understood that in most cases the Institute's academic regulations will apply. Specific derogations from the Institute's academic regulations should be set out here in detail. This is especially important in the case of joint awards

6.0 External Examiner Arrangements

Where appropriate and where in place specific information should be given here on the process for nomination and appointment of the external examiner as well as on the

operational arrangements that apply for the review of assessment tasks prior to submission and the consideration of completed assignments. Ideally external examiners should operate across the whole programme to ensure consistency. The arrangements for the examiner's attendance at examination board meetings should be set out (if, for instance, the examiner is expected to join the meeting by videoconference). Examiners appointed in respect of transnational programmes are expected to have an educational understanding of the national context in which the programme is being provided. A detailed account of the reporting arrangements for the examiner and the arrangements by which recommendations are communicated and acted on should also be given.

7.0 Resources and Facilities

The programme will have in place sufficient resources to ensure that an appropriate and sufficient range of learning and teaching resources are in place that enable students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

A detailed account is required of the resource requirements for the proposed programme and the plan for updating and replacing of resources.

8.0 The Student Study Experience

The institution and its programmes consistently and equitably apply pre-defined and published regulations that are fit for purpose and cover the whole cycle of the student study experience

The institution and its programmes consistently apply regulations on the whole cycle of the student experience addressing application & admissions, recognition for prior learning, and progression & achievement.

The regulations pertaining to the student experience are applied according to the specific rights of the students, their individual rights, and their diversity.

9.0 Student Supports, Social and Academic

An appropriate range of study research and individual wellbeing support and guidance is readily accessible to all students. An outline of the range of supports available for students

on the programme is required and the mechanisms for student representation and the gathering of student voices and views.

10.0 Profile and Affiliations of teaching staff

The compliment of teaching, research, academic, management and study support available to student is sufficient to enable them to achieve their learning outcomes. CVs (with publication lists and Film and Media Arts related outputs) for all staff involved in teaching and managing the programme are required. The institutional affiliation of each member of staff should be set out in a summary table. Individual responsibilities for modules should be identified where possible.

11.0 Staff Development arrangements

It is understood that joint initiatives to develop staff competency will form part of any collaborative effort. In this context, the strategy for staff development should be set out here.

12.0 Physical Learning Environment

For on campus, blended and online learning

The institution allocates appropriate financial resources to the material support of all aspects of student learning, including intended Learning Outcomes. The institution makes appropriate resources available to deliver the relevant quality of research. The institution ensures that the technical, digital, and physical infrastructure made available to students enables them to achieve the intended Learning Outcomes.

Summary

A Quality Assurance framework which outlines the key components of and stages in the assurance, management and enhancement of quality is the first step in the development of an agreed set of quality documentation. The elements of programme validation also need to be agreed with a detailed set of validation criteria and a framework for the SER report and review process.

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