

Accreditation from the perspective of a Higher Education Institution – Benefits, Pitfalls, Recommendations



UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO

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Background (1)

Università degli Studi di Milano

- Founded in 1924, is the second biggest Italian university
- Students \approx 60.000
- Professors \approx 2200
- 9 schools
 - Agricultural
 - **Mathematics, Physics and Natural Sciences**
 - Law
 - Letters and Philosophy
 - Medicine
 - Pharmacy
 - Political Sciences
 - Sciences and Veterinary Medicine

Background (2)

- The *Dipartimento di Informatica e Comunicazione* (DICO, Dept. of Informatics and Communication) and the *Dipartimento di Scienze dell'Informazione* (DSI, Dept. of Information Sciences), both located in Milan offer
 - Bachelor Degrees: **Informatics**, Digital Communication, Music Informatics
 - Master Degrees: Informatics, Informatics for Communication

Degree submitted for Review (1)

Bachelor Degree Informatica

- Besides the Bologna three-year structure, which was introduced in the academic year 2002/2003, the study programme has been recently revised in order to conform it to the national regulation Ministerial Decree (“Decreto Ministeriale”) n.544 of 2007 (DM 544/07) concerning quality of Higher Education
- Offered starting from the academic year 2008/2009

Degrees submitted for Review (2)

Bachelor Degree Informatica

•Provides a sound basic knowledge of the major areas of Informatics along with a good grasp of their methodologies and technologies, with the goal of providing an adequate and modern preparation for the different applications in the field. The degree has two curricula, the *preliminary curriculum*, aimed at providing basic training leading to the master degree, and the *professional curriculum*, aimed at preparing attendees towards immediate employment. The two curricula, while clearly differentiated, share broad common ground that preserves the cultural coherence of graduates.

- Study mode – full time
- Programme duration – 3 years (6 semesters), 180 ECTS CP
- Enrolment \approx 160 students per year; Staff 47
- Students pay tuition fee amount of 2000 EUR per academic year

Preparation / Workplan

- Date of Request for accreditation – May, 2010
- Date Submission of draft self-assessment report – December 21, 2010
- Date Submission of final Version – January 27, 2011
- Date of auditing visit – March 29-30, 2011
- Date of decision – June 27, 2011

- Milestones of preparation
 - Set up internal working group – October 2010
 - Identification of data sources and collection of data – October, November 2010
 - Writing of draft self-assessment report in English – November-December 2010
 - Revision of self-assessment report – January, 2011
 - Fill out of LO matrix – January 2011
 - Presentation of self-assessment report at the Council of Studies – February 2011

Self-Assessment Report (1)

- Stakeholders involved in preparing the Self-Assessment Report (SAR)
 - Teaching staff,
 - Programme coordinators,
 - Accreditation responsables
 - Central administration
 - Local (department) administration of DICO and DSI
 - Teaching manager
- Accreditation responsables were the main actors involved in the production of the SAR, by collecting, revising, and merging all the information coming from all involved stakeholders.
- SAR Extent / appr. nr. of pages Report – 35
- SAR Extent / appr. nr. of pages Annexes – 150 (12 annexes)

Self-Assessment Report (2)

- **3 biggest challenges in report writing**
 - Understanding the meaning of “learning outcome” in the EQANIE accreditation framework and identification of LO in our programme designed according to a different framework (i.e., Dublin framework).
 - Identification of the mappings between the three abstraction levels (overarching objectives (strategy), EURO-INF learning outcomes and modules learning outcomes) required in order to fill-in all involved tables, whose size is not easily manageable.
 - Translation of involved institutional regulations/resolutions documentation of UNIMI

Benefits of the accreditation experience

- The accreditation process has been considered by the entire UNIMI staff as an opportunity for improving the quality of the Bachelor Degree Informatica.
- The experience turned out to be very useful for defining with more precision the main objectives of the programme as well as for individuating improvements and weaknesses.
- The discussions and exchange of ideas we had with the colleagues from the audit team were very productive, as we had the opportunity to hear about similar experiences in Europe, and thus a yardstick for better evaluating our programme.

Your Accreditation: Pitfalls

- Read carefully the documentation for a correct understanding of the notion of learning outcome which is key for the whole process. The entire documentation the term *learning outcome* is used for referring both to the EURO-INF learning outcomes and to module learning outcomes, and not always the context helps in individuating the correct semantics.
- The existing documentation about the study programme is organized according to different criteria and is distributed across different offices (both central and local). To produce EQANIE documentation, you must collect, reorganize and restructure existing documents, this is a complex, time-consuming activity.
- The accreditation process requires a joint effort of all involved stakeholders. Getting people involved in the process and keeping them motivated is not easy, also because the accreditation activities come on top of the ordinary activities in charge to the teaching staff.

Your Accreditation: Recommendations

- To remark the importance of the accreditation procedure and the “officiality” of the final audit visit to involved parties, especially teaching staff, since the very beginning and periodically, to increase people motivation and commitment.
- Involve all different parties with sufficient preparation time in order to identify required documentation and collect it on time (considering also the time required for translation in English of regulations)
- To focus very soon on understanding the mappings between the three abstraction levels (overarching objectives (strategy), EURO-INF learning outcomes and modules learning outcomes) in order to produce since the beginning effective documentation.