With the support of the Lifelong Learning Programme of the European Union

Accreditation with EQANIE – Frequently Asked Questions

1. General questions concerning accreditation with EQANIE

<u>**Q1**: The accrediting body in our country is not yet authorized by EQANIE. Does EQANIE accredit degree programmes of itself?</u>

A1: Yes, EQANIE does conduct accreditations. As an initial step towards this, a request form and a curriculum overview should be sent to the EQANIE head office. More information on accreditation with EQANIE can be found at: http://www.eqanie.eu/pages/quality-label.php

<u>Q2: Has EQANIE published any model curricula or a standardized list with subjects/fields for study in the field of informatics, at which to orient the design of degree programmes?</u>

A2: EQANIE has not published any model curricula and currently does not recommend any. We think that a model curriculum would possibly lead to a misunderstanding of our approach to quality: EQANIE assesses if the goals defined for a degree programme are achieved, but we believe that there are many possible ways leading to this aim. EQANIE'S intention is not to prescribe in any way which methods / curricular content should be chosen in order not to hinder innovation or creative solutions or alternative approaches to education.

We do have a set of learning outcomes which form the basis for our assessment of programmes across all informatics disciplines (cf. the Euro-Inf Framework Standards p. 3-5). The EQANIE auditing team will check if the Euro-Inf learning outcomes are broadly covered by the applicant programmes. Within this wider framework, the degree programme(s) will be assessed against their own defined educational objectives.

<u>**Q3:** Does EQANIE have any check list enabling an early (initial) check of a programme's prospects for accreditation?</u>

A3: EQANIE does not currently have a checklist in this sense. In principle, the institution interested in the Euro-Inf Label should be able to demonstrate that its programme(s) produce(s) graduates who achieve the Euro-Inf learning outcomes (in particular those listed on p. 3-5). There is also the possibility for an in-principle check: a curriculum overview on the programmes for which application is envisaged can be submitted to the EQANIE head office. In an accompanying form the institution can indicate which specialization / experience the experts of a future auditing team should possess. On this basis, the EQANIE Accreditation Committee will make – case by case – a first appraisal of the in-principle prospect of the programme to be accredited by EQANIE. It will then also decide how many experts there should be in the audit team (standard 3 + 1 staff member).

EQANIE also does several checks before conducting an audit. The higher education institution is then invited to prepare the self-assessment report. During the period of preparing the report, the HEI may at any time send a draft report to the EQANIE head office and request feedback. At least one mandatory check of the self-assessment report is done before a final version of the self-assessment report is submitted.

2. Questions on the Self-Assessment Report (SAR)

Q1: Which interval should be covered by the data provided in the Self-Assessment Report? We realise that some aspects of the design and planning of our degree programme go back to times when the programme was offered for the first time. Also, there is some fluctuation in the teaching and support staff. Which date should be the reference for self assessment report?

A1: Most of the data should cover an interval of the last four to five academic years, e.g.: developments of the budget for staff or for research; or data on study success, graduates etc. It is important to allow the experts to gain an impression of the programme's development over time, e.g. is the budget for teaching decreasing or increasing over the years, and why. If the applicant programme in its current form is still very young, but has a considerable overlap with an older version of the programme, one might still find it useful to analyse data from this older programme in order to make predictions / draw conclusions for the new programme. Examples are student intakes, graduate placements etc…

A very interesting and important element of the SAR is the HEI's analysis of the data collected and the formulations of strategies or expectations for the coming years. Both these aspects, although crucial, are often omitted in the SAR!

Q2: Should any documentation / information on the applicant programme that is available online (e.g. on the webpage of the applicant HEI) be included in the written documentation / made available in print?

A2: First, we do not expect you to send a print version of the documentation. The material on CD-ROM or in a zipped email file is fine (c.f. the answer to the last question "Q: In which format should we submit our self-assessment report?).

Second, yes: All information that is relevant / useful for the accreditation process should be included in the SAR or its appendices. EQANIE does not expect its auditors to look for information beyond the SAR (even though it is a positive aspect if information on the programme is available online).

Q3: Is it enough to give a 5-6 lines long description of the content in the Module Handbook if its native language reference is 20 lines long?

A3: The answer would be "yes" only in the event that a major part of the information contained in the original version of the handbook is redundant. Please make sure that all relevant information is translated and included in the English version of the module handbook.

Q4: How do I write learning outcomes?

A4: The formulation of learning outcomes at programme or module level is, admittedly, not an easy task. Neither is it easy to use learning outcomes descriptions once they have been agreed on. EQANIE dedicated a whole conference to this issue.

A very useful practical guide to working with learning outcomes can be found in the conference proceedings ("Using Learning Outcomes – Future Potential, Advantages and Traps" – Presentation by Prof. Áine Hyland, European Universities Association). Among other things, the presentation includes advice on which verbs to use and which to avoid when formulating learning outcomes. Another very useful document is "Writing and Using Learning Outcomes: a Practical Guide" (retrieved at: http://www.bologna.msmt.cz/files/learning-outcomes.pdf).

3. Questions on the templates for the self-assessment report

Q1: A question on the module handbook form - what do you mean by "Module level"?

A1: The term "level" refers to the study cycle - Bachelor/first cycle or Master/Second Cycle.

Q2: Which staff members should be included in the staff handbook (staff CVs)?

A2: The staff handbook should include all members of academic staff who assume tasks in research and /or teaching. CVs of laboratory or technical staff do not need to be included.

Q3: How should we interpret the Table 4 "Basic Data for Structural Point 4.3 – Staff Participating in the Degree Programme"?

A3: This table is intended to provide information on staff contributing to the degree programme. It should provide an overview broken down by position, type, permanent posts allocated and number of individuals employed. Misunderstandings may happen due to diversity of titles or classification of staff across the European Higher Education Area.

Professor[1]: a senior, tenured professor. Most importantly, the row "Professorships" only refers to so-called "full professors".

Associate professor:[2] A mid-level, usually tenured, professor (e.g. a senior lecturer, principal lecturer or reader in UK terminology).

[1] Source: Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Associate_professor#Associate_professor (last retrieved on April 13th, 2011).
[2] Ibid.

Assistant professor/lecturer:[3] An introductory level professor. A position generally taken after receiving PhD and/or completing a post-doctoral fellowship.

Other academic staff (fixed-term or permanent): Staff holding an academic degree employed by the University on the basis of a fixed-term or permanent contract, which also contribute to carrying out the degree programme (e.g. teaching staff, staff responsible for carrying out projects / special assignments etc.).

The titles of the rows may be modified by the applicant HEI in the interest of clarification.

Q4: Could you please provide some guidance/example what the SAR should include under section 2.2.1 "Target group"?

A4: This section should provide information on the typical candidates you wish to apply for the degree programme. What kind of profile do they have, do you address local students or do you particularly aim at an international clientele? What qualifications / interests or plans for their future should they typically have? For students at Master's level: do you wish to attract primarily your own Bachelor's graduates (and if yes, from which degrees at your faculty would they typically come?); do you envisage your Master's students bringing some on-the-job experience?

While entrance / admission requirements are really formal requirements, the target group refers to the envisaged typical group of students. This is important additional information that will help to assess objectives and overall concept of a degree programme.

4. Other Questions

Q: In which format should we submit our self-assessment report?

In principle, we suggest that the self-assessment report should be submitted in searchable pdf-format. The document pages should be numbered. Also, it facilitates the work of the auditors tremendously if the files are not only numbered (e.g. "Appendix B"), but if all file names indicate their content (e.g. "Appendix B – Module Handbook").

Also, each Appendix should not constitute of more than one file. If the applicant institution submits a number of individual (sub-)files within one appendix (e.g. "CV of staff X.pdf", "CV of staff Y.pdf", "CV of staff Z. pdf"), the reading becomes very difficult for the audit team. Small, individual files should always be merged to one single file. Creating separate (sub-)folders for each appendix should be avoided.

[3] Ibid.