

# Guidelines for Good Practice for Awarding Joint Degrees



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*“This brings us to another point of attention raised by the ENIC-NARICs: the lack of adequate and transparent information about the joint programme itself and the qualification awarded. ENIC-NARICs indicate that the documents they receive, such as the degree, the transcript and/or the diploma supplement, do not provide the information they need about the institutions involved and their role, the programme and its details and the awarded degree(s). The first shortcoming seems to be the information on the degree. Such a degree needs to clarify a lot of elements but these are apparently not consistently published on that document. A second shortcoming concerns the Diploma Supplement. Two main issues were identified. First, the format used is not based on the European template and, second, the issued Diploma Supplement is a national one and does not cover the totality of the joint programme.”*

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**ENIC-NARICs** The European Network of Information Centres (ENICs) was established by the Council of Europe and UNESCO. An ENIC is a body set up by the national authorities which generally provides information on the recognition of foreign qualifications, education systems and opportunities for studying abroad. The network of National Academic Recognition Information Centres (NARICs), on the other hand, is an initiative of the European Commission. The network aims at improving the academic recognition of qualifications and periods of study in the Member States of the EU, the EEA countries and associated countries. In the majority of these countries, institutions of higher education are autonomous, taking their own decisions on the admission of (foreign) students. As a result, most NARICs do not take recognition decisions, but offer information and advice on foreign qualifications and education systems. ([www.enic-naric.net](http://www.enic-naric.net))

## Foreword

**C**loser cooperation between quality assurance agencies and recognition bodies is an essential characteristic of a well-functioning European Higher Education Area. The European Consortium for Accreditation in higher education (ECA, [www.eacaconsortium.net](http://www.eacaconsortium.net)) has acknowledged this since its inception in 2003. ENIC-NARICs from partner countries take part in ECA meetings and projects. ECA members in 2005 and their respective ENIC-NARICs signed the '*Joint Declaration regarding the Automatic Recognition of Qualifications*', the so-called Vienna Sententia<sup>1</sup>. This declaration clearly underlines the important link between quality assurance and recognition.

It is in this spirit of fruitful and long-term cooperation that ECA has kept its focus on recognition issues in all its activities. This document is the result of such a joint venture: the JOQAR project. JOQAR stands for *Joint programmes: quality assurance and recognition of degrees awarded*. The JOQAR project proposes

to facilitate the organisation of Erasmus Mundus programmes (and joint programmes in general) by focusing on the external quality assurance and accreditation of these programmes and on the recognition of degrees awarded by these programmes. The project partnership consequently includes quality assurance and accreditation agencies (QA&A agencies) and ENIC-NARICs. More information about the project is available on ECA's website: [www.eacaconsortium.net](http://www.eacaconsortium.net).

**Closer cooperation between quality assurance agencies and recognition bodies is an essential characteristic of a well-functioning European Higher Education Area.**

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<sup>1</sup> *Joint Declaration concerning the Automatic Recognition of Qualifications (2005)*, European Consortium for Accreditation in higher education, The Hague, <http://www.eacaconsortium.net/main/documents/main-documents#viennasententia>.

This publication is the result of the hard work of the so-called Recognition Group of the JOQAR project. All the project partners are very grateful for the work of **Inger Bruun** (Danish Agency for Universities and Internationalisation), **Jenneke Lokhoff** (Nuffic, The Netherlands), **Peder de Thurah Toft** (Danish Agency for Universities and Internationalisation), **Hanna Reczulska** (ENIC-NARIC Poland), **Gemma Zabbar** (UK NARIC) and **Tatsiana Zahorskaya** (UK NARIC).

**The Guidelines for Good Practice for Awarding Joint Degrees would not be as complete without the input of such a great number of ENIC-NARICs.**

The Guidelines for Good Practice for Awarding Joint Degrees would not be as complete without the input of such a great number of ENIC-NARICs – who gave their precious time to share their experience with qualifications awarded by joint programmes. They provided valuable feedback on the draft versions of the Guidelines for Good Practice and participated in the ENIC-NARIC

Workshop (March 2012) where these were further developed. The project partners would like to explicitly thank: **Joey Alberts** (Netherlands), **Yves E. Beaudin** (Canada), **Emita Blagdan** (Croatia), **Silke Graefinghoff** (Germany), **Hendrik Jan Hobbes** (Netherlands), **Adrian Iordache** (Romania), **Nina Kowalewska** (Sweden), **Luca Lantero** (Italy), **Ulvi Maamees** (Estonia), **Erwin Malfroy** (Belgium), **Charlotte Miles** (France), **Maisa Montonen** (Finland), **Johanna Niemi** (Finland), **Dženan Omanović** (Bosnia and Herzegovina), **Eva Palmer** (Hungary), **Juan Carlos Parodi Román** (Spain), **Patricia Saupt** (Austria), **Hugo Sena** (Portugal), **Solvita Siliņa** (Latvia), **Katarina Simic Jagunic** (Croatia), **Stepanka Skuhrova** (Czech Republic), **Kristina Sutkute** (Lithuania), **Kostadin Tonev** (Bulgaria), **Canan Unvan** (Turkey).



## 1. Introduction

In recent years, several problems regarding the recognition of degrees awarded by joint programmes have been brought to light<sup>2</sup>. First and foremost, recognition information centres (ENIC-NARICs) and institutional credential evaluators have indicated that the documents they receive, such as the degree, the transcript and/or the diploma supplement, do not provide all the information they require. For recognition purposes there is a need for clear and transparent information about the institutions involved in the joint programme, their role, the joint programme details and the awarded (joint) degree. This lack of information is already an issue among countries that have a relatively good knowledge of each other's systems. There might therefore be an even greater problem when (joint) degrees and diploma supplements awarded by joint programmes are presented for recognition in countries that are less familiar with the relevant higher education systems.

This document provides higher education institutions (and their joint programmes) that award joint degrees with guidelines for good practices. These guidelines are not to be interpreted as setting standards;

they provide the perspective of ENIC-NARICs. **The main aim of these guidelines is in fact to facilitate and improve the full recognition of joint degrees.** It intends to do so by

### Recommendation on the recognition of joint degrees

This recommendation was adopted in 2004 and brings joint degrees under the legal framework of the Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region. The recommendation underlines that the basic principles regarding recognition also apply to joint degrees. In addition, it sets specific requirements that the joint degrees should fulfil. European higher education has come a long way since this recommendation was issued and there have been calls to update it to better reflect current definitions and practices of joint programmes and joint degrees. (www.enic-naric.net)

<sup>2</sup> For examples, see: <http://www.eacaconsortium.net/main/news/detail/enic-narics:-help-us-facilitate-recognition-of-%28joint%29-degrees/9> and <http://www.eacaconsortium.net/main/news/detail/report:-the-recognition-of-qualifications-awarded-by-joint-programmes/10>.

clarifying the expectations of ENIC-NARICs regarding the design and the content of the degree and the Diploma Supplement. These expectations of course also regard the consortium offering the joint programme and the joint programme itself. **These guidelines are guidelines for good practice; even without implementing these a joint degree can still be recognisable.**

The guidelines explicitly refer to the European Diploma Supplement while joint programmes in practice include institutions from all over the world. The guidelines therefore include an additional chapter regarding other explanatory documentation (e.g. a transcript). These guidelines build on the underlying principles of the guidelines regarding the Diploma Supplement.

Some aspects or practical implications of the guidelines for good practice might be difficult to readily grasp. This document therefore includes examples for clarification of some of the guidelines. If a guideline has a clarifying example, you can find it on the opposing page.

It is possible that some of the good practices presented in this publication cannot be implemented because of regulations in one or more of the relevant national legal frameworks. This should not cause alarm. It clearly underlines the second aim of these guidelines for good practice. **The second aim of these guidelines is to raise awareness among national authorities about the problems joint programmes encounter when awarding joint degrees and Diploma Supplements.**

## 2. Glossary

In previous projects regarding joint programmes<sup>3</sup>, quality assurance agencies and ENIC-NARICs explored the terminology involved in joint programmes but never came to agreed definitions. Here, we present a glossary of all relevant terms for this publication. More information about the agreed terminology can be found in [Chapter 4. Joint Programme Terminology](#).

It is however important to first present the Lisbon Recognition Convention's definition of a **qualification**: *“any degree, diploma or other certificate issued by a competent authority attesting the successful completion of a higher education programme”*<sup>4</sup>.

### Degree

Any degree, diploma or other certificate issued by a competent authority attesting the successful completion of a higher education programme.

### Joint programme

An integrated curriculum coordinated and offered jointly by different higher education institutions and leading to a (double/multiple or joint) degree.

### Joint degree

A single document awarded by higher education institutions offering the joint programme and nationally acknowledged as the recognised award of the joint programme.

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<sup>3</sup> *Transnational European Evaluation Project II* (TEEP II, 2004-2006), coordinated by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and *Transnational European Accreditation decisions and Mutual recognition agreements 2* (TEAM 2, 2008-2010) coordinated by the European Consortium for Accreditation in higher education.

<sup>4</sup> Convention on the recognition of qualifications concerning higher education in the European region, Lisbon 1997, Art. 1

### **Multiple degree**

Separate degrees awarded by higher education institutions offering the joint programme attesting the successful completion of this programme.

### **Double degree**

Two degrees awarded by higher education institutions offering the joint programme attesting the successful completion of this programme.

→ *A double degree is a specific type of multiple degree*

### **Dual degree**

Two degrees awarded individually, attesting the successful completion of two separate curricula, with potential overlap and efficiencies in course-taking, and, if more than one institution is involved, each institution is primarily responsible for its own degree.

→ *A dual degree is not awarded by a joint programme*


### **Awarding institution**

A higher education institution issuing qualifications, i.e. degrees, diplomas or other certificates. In the case of joint degrees, an awarding institution is one of the two or more institutions involved in conferring the joint degree thus formally recognising the achievements of a student enrolled in the joint programme.

### **(Joint programme) consortium**

A group of two or more higher education institutions and potentially other contributors (e.g. research centres) with the objective of integrating teaching and learning activities for providing a joint programme; although not all participants necessarily award a (joint) degree.

### 3. Guidelines for Good Practice

**T**he elements that play a role when evaluating a degree are the same for both regular and joint degrees. The context of these elements is however quite different. This chapter therefore provides guidelines for good practice for all the distinctive elements that play a role from the perspective of the recognition of the degree. The following elements are dealt with: the (joint programme) consortium, the joint programme, the joint degree, the Diploma Supplement and other explanatory documentation. Each issue is first analysed and then summarised in corresponding good practices. In addition, examples for clarification of some of the guidelines are included. If a guideline has a clarifying example, you can find it on the opposing page. Guidelines with a clarifying example are followed by the following symbol: .

The following guidelines for good practices are of course only applicable to joint programmes that award joint degrees.

#### 3.1. The Consortium

*The consortium traditionally refers to the group of higher education institutions who offer the joint programme, irrespective of whether they are involved in awarding the joint degree. The consortium can however additionally include other contributors (e.g. research centres) who are not necessarily higher education institutions. Those contributors might be important partners in the programme, but do not normally have degree awarding powers. For this reason the guidelines below do not take these partners into account here.*

*It is important that the higher education institutions involved in the consortium are allowed to offer the joint programme. This refers first and foremost to the fact that each institution needs to be recognised and/or accredited as a higher education institution in the higher education system in which they operate. This also refers to the fact that the higher education institutions recognise the joint programme as their own.*

*Finally, each higher education institution should be (legally) allowed to offer the joint programme, even if the institution is not involved in awarding the joint degree. This refers to the concern that higher education institutions without the competence or appropriate recognition to offer a certain programme (e.g. master's programme) or award a certain degree (e.g. Master of Science), can use a joint programme to do so anyway. As long as the joint programme and its joint degree are recognised elsewhere, such an institution could offer its national students a recognised ("foreign") degree. Joint programmes then provide an unacceptable escape route out of the national legal framework and the awarded joint degree would raise recognition concerns in the higher education system of the institution that uses this escape route. To conclude, if an institution isn't allowed to offer a certain type of programme (because of for example legal limitations), this institution shouldn't offer that type of programme as a joint programme.*

#### **GUIDELINES FOR GOOD PRACTICE REGARDING THE CONSORTIUM**

- 1.1. All institutions in the consortium are recognised and/or accredited as higher education institutions in their (sub)national higher education systems;
- 1.2. All higher education institutions in the consortium fully recognise the joint programme as a programme offered by their institution;
- 1.3. Each higher education institution in the consortium is entitled to legally offer this type of programme (level, orientation, discipline) as a joint programme, even if that institution is not involved in the awarding of the joint degree.

### 3.2. The Joint Programme

*The joint programme here refers to the higher education programme leading to the awarding of a joint degree. The main concern here is whether the joint programme is offered in accordance with the relevant legal framework. In the most restricted interpretation, 'relevant' here refers to the locations where the student that is awarded the joint degree has actually studied. In the broadest interpretation, 'relevant' can be interpreted as the legal frameworks of all the institutions involved in the joint programme. Some higher education legal frameworks have specific requirements regarding joint programmes. In some cases, the programme needs to be explicitly identified, recognised and/or accredited as a joint programme.*

#### Guidelines for Good Practice regarding the Joint Programme

- 2.1. The joint programme is offered in accordance with the legal frameworks of the relevant (sub)national higher education systems;
- 2.2. The joint programme is quality assured and/or accredited as a joint programme.





### 3.3. The Joint Degree




*The joint degree is a single document awarded by higher education institutions offering the joint programme. This degree is acknowledged as the recognised award of the joint programme in all relevant countries. Since it is a joint award, this means that it is presented as a single document. The joint degree replaces typical institutional or national degrees and it therefore must be nationally acknowledged as the recognised award of the joint programme. This also means that the joint degree is issued and signed as stipulated in the relevant national legislation, i.e. signed by the competent authorities (rector, vice-chancellor, etc.) as the representatives of the institutions involved in the joint degree. Note that this definition includes the possibility for institutions to delegate their authority to sign the joint degree. This type of delegation should however also be allowed in the relevant national legislations.*

*The joint degree should only refer to the awarding institutions and not include other participants in the consortium which are not involved in awarding the joint degree. References can be logos and or full names of these institutions. If full names are included, this needs to be done uniformly: either the original names or translated versions.*

*A joint degree confers a qualification (e.g. Master of Science in Physics) to a graduate. It is important that the conferred qualification is the qualification recognised in all the relevant national legal frameworks. This could for example mean that the joint degree needs to include reference to qualifications in original languages.*

*Bear in mind, that credential assessment services and companies (e.g. in North America) only request to submit the degree and do not necessarily request additional information, such as a Diploma Supplement. This does underline the importance of the degree itself. The information on the degree should therefore be clear from the start.*

### Guidelines for Good Practice regarding the Joint Degree

- 3.1. The joint degree is awarded in accordance with the legal frameworks governing the awarding institutions and is recognised as a joint degree in the higher education systems of the awarding institutions;
- 3.2. The joint degree includes reference to all relevant (sub)national legal frameworks in accordance to which the degree was awarded; 
- 3.3. References to higher education institutions (logos and/or full names) are limited to the awarding institutions/authorities, i.e. only the institutions that award this joint degree;
- 3.4. The joint degree is only signed by the competent authority/-ies representing the awarding institutions; 
- 3.5. The joint degree includes the qualification's full name(s) as recognised in all the relevant legal frameworks; 
- 3.6. If the consortium has agreed on one responsible institution (such as a coordinating institution or a contact point), this is indicated on the joint degree (e.g. next to the name of that institution).

## CLARIFYING EXAMPLES

**3.2. The joint degree includes reference to all relevant (sub)national legal frameworks in accordance to which the degree was awarded; and**

**Example:** *A joint master's degree in biochemistry is awarded by higher education institutions from three different countries. In two of these countries, the institutions are legally allowed to use the same title for the degree, in this case a Master of Science in Biochemistry. In the third country the institution has to use a national title different from the title Master of Science in Biochemistry.*

*On the degree it should be clear that the holder of the joint degree is awarded these two titles:*

- *The joint title, in this case "Master of Science in Biochemistry", followed by reference to the relevant national legislation in the two countries including reference to the relevant article(s).*
- *The national title, followed by reference to the relevant national legislation in the third country including reference to the relevant article(s).*

**3.4. The joint degree is only signed by the competent authority/-ies representing the awarding institutions;**

**Example:** *A joint master's degree programme in biomedicine is organised by a consortium of two universities in two different countries. According to their national legislation, both universities are legally authorised to offer the joint degree programme. The programme includes half a year laboratory research work at private medical laboratories associated to the programme and the consortium.*

*The degree only includes the logos/names of the two universities and the signatures by the competent authority signing on behalf of the two awarding universities.*

*The degree does not mention the medical laboratories.*

**3.5. The joint degree includes the qualification's full name(s) as recognised in all the relevant legal frameworks;**

**Example:** *If a German, a Polish and an Italian higher education institution issue a joint master's degree, it should normally include the following qualifications:*

- *'Master xxx' (which is the German qualification),*
- *'Magister xxx' (which is the Polish qualification) and*
- *'Laurea Magistrale xxx' (which is the Italian qualification) on the joint degree.*

**See also the clarifying example under 3.2.**



### 3.4. The Diploma Supplement



*The following guidelines for good practice are to be read in addition to the original instructions included in the Diploma Supplement template. The outline of the Diploma Supplement can be found as an annex to this publication; the instructions and explanatory notes can be downloaded at the European Commission's website: [http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc/ds/ds\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc/ds/ds_en.pdf).*

*The guidelines for good practice do not change the original Diploma Supplement template but demonstrate good practices when producing a Diploma Supplement for a joint degree. The Diploma Supplement should enable individuals with no prior knowledge of the joint programme to fully comprehend the awarded joint degree. A Diploma Supplement awarded together with a joint degree should therefore include all the necessary references as included in the guidelines above. A joint degree consequently includes a joint Diploma Supplement.*

*Joint programme consortia have to bear in mind that those reading their documents need to be able to authenticate that information. However, take care not to overburden the recipient of your Diploma Supplements (credential evaluators, employers, etc.) and rather present your information as clear and concise as possible.*

*Some joint programmes regularly change their coordinator and/or coordinating institution. This shouldn't pose a problem as long as the information regarding the joint programme (archive) is kept available.*

**GUIDELINES FOR GOOD PRACTICE REGARDING THE DIPLOMA SUPPLEMENT**

- 4.1. The student identification number (section 1.4), should include reference to the relevant system (institution, country, ...);
- 4.2. The name(s) of the qualification (section 2.1) includes the qualification's original full name(s) (as included on the joint degree, and where relevant, with Latin transcriptions) with reference to all relevant (sub)national legal frameworks;
- 4.3. Where applicable, the awarded title(s) (section 2.1) is/are included in its original language(s) according to all relevant (sub)national legal frameworks;
- 4.4. If a graduate receives other national degrees alongside the joint degree (i.e. the joint degree is part of a multiple degree arrangement), this should be indicated and included (section 2.1);
- 4.5. The status of the institutions awarding the joint degree (thus not limited to those institutions where the graduate actually studied) is explicitly included next to the full original names of the awarding institutions. (section 2.3);
- 4.6. If the joint degree only included translations of the full original names of the awarding institutions, these translations are included alongside the full original name of the awarding institution (section 2.3);
- 4.7. For joint programmes, the name and status of institutions administering studies (section 2.4) refers to the institutions where the graduate has actually studied; 
- 4.8. Joint programmes that make use of more than one language (not only in teaching but also for student work) explicitly include how these languages are used (e.g. balance in credits, master's thesis in national language) (section 2.5);
- 4.9. The level of the programme (section 3.1) refers to the level and context of the qualification in all the higher education systems of the awarding institutions (where applicable, in all the relevant national qualifications frameworks); 

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## CLARIFYING EXAMPLES

- 4.7. For joint programmes, the name and status of institutions administering studies (section 2.4) refers to the institutions where the graduate has actually studied;

**Example:** A joint programme was offered by four recognised universities: University A, University B, University C and University D. The student studied at two universities: University B and University C. Thus, in section 2.4 (name and status of institutions administering studies), names and status of these two universities should be included:

- University B – state university in France
- University C – recognised non-public university in Poland

- 4.9. The level of the programme (section 3.1) refers to the level and context of the qualification in all the higher education systems of the awarding institutions (where applicable, in all the relevant national qualifications frameworks);

**Example:** A joint bachelor's programme is offered by three higher education institutions from three different countries: Ireland, Ukraine, UK. The level of the programme in each country should be specified in section 3.1.:

- Ireland: Bachelor, first cycle degree, level 8 in Irish QF
- Ukraine: Bakalavr, first cycle degree giving access to second cycle studies in Ukraine
- UK: Bachelor, first cycle degree, level 6 in QF for England, Wales and Northern Ireland

**GUIDELINES FOR GOOD PRACTICE REGARDING THE DIPLOMA SUPPLEMENT** *(continued)*

- 4.10. Any reference to credits should include an explanation about the credit system(s) used by the joint programme consortium (section 3.2);
- 4.11. The access requirements (section 3.3) refer to the overall access requirements and preferably include which level and subject-specific requirements give access to the programme (e.g. reference to relevant qualifications frameworks);
- 4.12. The programme requirements (section 4.2) include the overall learning outcomes of the joint programme and do so in a way readable and understandable by non-professionals;
- 4.13. The programme details (section 4.3) include information about the individual study pathway of the graduate, which includes the programme components (with full name, credits and grade) and the institution that offered that part of the curriculum;
- 4.14. The grading scheme (section 4.4) includes information about all the grading systems referred to under the programme details (section 4.3), i.e. the individual study pathway of the graduate;
- 4.15. Access to further academic and/or professional study, especially leading to any specific qualifications, or levels of study is included for each of the awarding institutions higher education systems (section 5.1);
- 4.16. The professional status (section 5.2) includes, where applicable, references to the regulated profession in the countries of the awarding institutions to which the graduate has access (and/or the European Directive on the recognition of professional qualifications);
- 4.17. If there are other members in the joint programme consortium which are not involved in awarding the joint degree, their full name, status and role in the joint programme is included (section 6.1);



## CLARIFYING EXAMPLES

- 4.11. The access requirements (section 3.3) refer to the overall access requirements and preferably include which level and context give access to the programme (e.g. reference to relevant qualifications frameworks);

**Example:** *three-year Bachelor's degree (of minimum 180 ECTS credits, at level 6 in the European Qualifications Framework) or its recognised equivalent in biology, physics, chemistry (or related fields).*

- 4.13. The programme details (section 4.3) include information about the individual study pathway of the graduate, which includes the programme components (with full name, credits and grade) and the institution that offered that part of the curriculum;

**Example:** *A joint programme was offered jointly by six institutions. The student studied in three different institutions: University A (Germany), University B (France) and University C (Norway). ECTS credits were used by the programme. Three different grading scales were used:*

Sem.	University	Subject	Mark [1]	ECTS credits [2]
SEMESTER 1	University A	XXXX - Subject 1	1.7	5
	University A	XXXX - Subject 2	1.0	7,5
	University A	XXXX - Subject 3	1.3	7,5
	University A	XXXX - Subject 4	1.0	5
	University A	XXXX - Subject 5	2.0	5
	<b>University A</b>	<b>Results semester 1</b>	<b>1.3</b>	<b>30</b>
S. 2	University B	XXXX - Subject 6	15,50	5
	University B	XXXX - Subject 7	17,40	5
	University B	XXXX - Subject 8	17,72	5
	University B	XXXX - Subject 9	14,65	5
	University B	XXXX - Subject 10	17,76	5
	University B	XXXX - Subject 11	12,90	5
	<b>University B</b>	<b>Results semester 2</b>	<b>16,00</b>	<b>30</b>
S. 3	University C	XXXX - Subject 12	A	10
	University C	XXXX - Subject 13	A	10
	University C	XXXX - Subject 14	A	10
	<b>University C</b>	<b>Results semester 3</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>30</b>
S. 4	University C	Master Thesis "Title ..."	A	30
	<b>University C</b>	<b>Results semester 4</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>MSc results</b>				<b>120</b>

4.14. The grading scheme (section 4.4) includes information about all the grading systems referred to under the programme details (section 4.3), i.e. the individual study pathway of the graduate;

*Example:* Referring to the above example the description of the grading scale in section 4.4 of the Diploma Supplement:

**[1] Grading scales**

University A		
1.0 – 1.5	=	excellent
>1.5 – 2.0	=	very good
>2.0 – 2.5	=	good
>2,5 – 3.0	=	satisfactory
>3.0 – 4	=	sufficient
>4	=	fail

University B		
16+	=	excellent
15 – 16	=	very good
13 – 14	=	good
11 – 12	=	quite good
10 – 11	=	pass
<10	=	fail

University C	
A	= Excellent (outstanding performance with only minor mistakes)
B	= Very good (above the average but with some errors)
C	= Good (generally sound work with a number of notable errors)
D	= Satisfactory (fair but with significant shortcomings)
E	= Sufficient (performance meets the minimum criteria)
FX	= Fail (some work required before the credit can be awarded)
F	= Fail (considerable further work is required)

**[2] ECTS credits**

- 1 academic year = 60 ECTS credits
- 1 semester = 30 ECTS credits

- 4.16. The professional status (section 5.2) includes, where applicable, references to the regulated profession in the countries of the awarding institutions to which the graduate has access (and/or the European Directive on the recognition of professional qualifications);**

**Example:** *A consortium of three higher education institutions from Indonesia, The Netherlands and the UK offer a joint degree programme in the field of Tropical Medicine. Tropical Medicine is a regulated profession in the UK and Indonesia. However, the content of the programme only gives access to the profession in one country, the UK. In this case it should be stated that the degree provides access to the regulated profession of Tropical Medicine in the UK (country) and, in case of supplementary licensure examinations, give information on the relevant professional body.*

- 4.17. If there are other members in the joint programme consortium which are not involved in awarding the joint degree, their full name, status and role in the joint programme is included (section 6.1);**

**Example:** *A Master of Arts in International Journalism is developed jointly by a consortium of higher education institutions based in Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands and the UK. The Danish, German and UK institution award the joint degree. The programme offers students an opportunity to complete an internship with a UK based media and communications research centre which is also a member of the consortium. The information on the higher education institution from the Netherlands and the UK based research centre (full names, status and role in the joint programme) should be included in section 6.1 of the joint Diploma Supplement.*

**GUIDELINES FOR GOOD PRACTICE REGARDING THE DIPLOMA SUPPLEMENT** *(continued)*

- 4.18. The further information sources (section 6.2) should include information about the coordinating institution or contact point where the recipient of the Diploma Supplement (such as credential evaluators, employers, etc.) can contact the joint programme with additional questions;
- 4.19. The further information sources (section 6.2) should include (a permalink to) the website of the joint programme;
- 4.20. The further information sources (section 6.2) should at least include information about the relevant ENIC-NARIC of the coordinating institution (or other information centre, if there is no ENIC-NARIC);
- 4.21. If the joint programme was quality assured and/or accredited as such, reference to the responsible quality assurance and accreditation agencies should be included (section 6.2);
- 4.22. Where available, reference to each of the national registers with recognised higher education institutions and/or programmes should be included (section 6.2);
- 4.23. If the signatures on the Diploma Supplement (section 7) are different from the signatures on the joint degree certificate, the Diploma Supplement should explain why this is the case;
- 4.24. The presented information on the higher education system (section 8) should at least include the systems from which the graduate has obtained its degree.

## CLARIFYING EXAMPLES

- 4.20. The further information sources (section 6.2) should at least include information about the relevant ENIC-NARIC of the coordinating institution;**

***Example:** The awarding institutions are located in the following countries: Poland, Portugal and Spain. Then contact details of ENIC-NARIC offices from Poland, Portugal and Spain (name, address, phone number, website and email) should be included.*

*In case the partners are from outside of the ENIC-NARIC region, a national contact point on recognition can be included, but only if available.*

*The purpose of including the contact points is that recipients are able to contact the national information points with any questions related to the status of the degree.*

- 4.21. If the joint programme was quality assured and/or accredited as such, reference to the responsible quality assurance and accreditation agencies should be included (section 6.2);**

***Example:** Accreditation and quality assurance is a crucial element in recognition. The full names of all the quality assurance and accreditation organisations involved in quality assurance of the joint programme should be mentioned.*

*It is recommended to include the type of procedure (e.g. external assessment of the joint programme) and resulting status (e.g. programme accreditation).*

- 4.22. Where available, reference to each of the national registers with recognised higher education institutions and/or programmes should be included (section 6.2);**

***Example:** A joint degree is awarded by higher education institutions based in Russia, Spain and the UK. Section 6.2 of the Diploma Supplement then provides reference to the National Accreditation Agency (Russia), Registro de Universidades, Centros y Títulos (RUCT) (Spain) and the Department for Business Innovation and Skills, List of Recognised Bodies (UK).*

- 4.23. If the signatures on the Diploma Supplement (section 7) are different from the signatures on the joint degree certificate, the Diploma Supplement should explain why this is the case;**

***Example:** The joint degree is awarded and signed by the partner universities based in Belgium, Portugal and Spain. As a coordinator of the joint programme, the Belgian University issues the joint Diploma Supplement. To reduce the amount of paper work, other members of the consortium delegate their right to sign this Diploma Supplement to the coordinating institution. Section 7 of the Diploma supplement includes the clarification that the coordinating institution has been authorised by the other partner universities to sign the joint Diploma Supplement on their behalf.*

### 3.5. Other explanatory documentation

*The use of the Diploma Supplement is strongly encouraged by all those involved in the recognition of degrees in higher education. If however awarding such a document is not legally possible, it is recommended to produce the required information by other means. This can be either generic or personalised. Generic can be through a separate document or a separate webpage. It is recommended that each graduation class should have a separate webpage and that these webpages are archived and thus easily traceable.*

The inclusion of the information presented below can be considered a good practice.

#### GUIDELINES FOR GOOD PRACTICE

##### To identify the awarded qualification:

- The qualification's original full name(s) (as included on the joint degree) with reference to all relevant (sub)national legal frameworks;
- Where applicable, the awarded (professional) title(s) in its original language(s) according to all relevant (sub)national legal frameworks;
- If a graduate receives other national degrees alongside the joint degree (i.e. the joint degree is part of a multiple degree arrangement), this should be included;

##### To identify the consortium offering the joint programme:

- All the members of the consortium offering the joint programme, identified through their full original names and where relevant translations;
- For each of these institutions: status, role in the joint programme and whether it is involved in awarding the joint degree;

>>continued on next page>>

**To identify the joint programme:**

- Field(s) of study including, where relevant, the official national field(s) of study;
- Language(s) of instruction and assessment and, if more than one language is used, how these languages are used (e.g. balance in credits, master's thesis in national language);
- The level and context of the programme (qualification) in all the higher education systems of the awarding institutions (where applicable, in all the relevant national qualifications frameworks);
- The official workload (and/or length) of the programme and, where reference is made to credits, an explanation about the credit system(s) used by the joint programme consortium;
- The overall admission requirements such as the level and subject-specific requirements which give access to the programme (e.g. reference to overarching qualifications frameworks);
- The overall learning outcomes of the joint programme;

**To identify the graduate's achievement:**

- The programme details, including information about the individual study pathway of the graduate, which includes the programme components (with full name, credits and grade acquired by the graduate) and the institution that offered that part of the curriculum;
- An explanation of the grading system(s) referred to under the programme details, i.e. the individual study pathway of the graduate;

>>continued on next page>>

**To understand the awarded qualification:**

- Indicate to which further studies the qualification gives access. This refers to academic and/or professional study, especially leading to any specific qualifications, or levels of study for each of the awarding institutions' higher education systems;
- Details of any rights to practise, or professional status accorded to the holder of this qualification in the countries of the awarding institutions to which the graduate has access;
- Information about the higher education systems from which the graduate has obtained its degree;

**Additional information:**

- A (perma)link to the website of the joint programme;
- Information about the coordinating institution or contact point where the recipient of the document can contact the joint programme with additional questions;
- Contact information about the competent quality assurance and/or accreditation bodies under which competency the joint programme falls;
- Where available, reference to a national register with recognised higher education institutions and/or programmes.



## 4. Joint Programme Terminology

There seems to be a lot of confusion regarding joint programmes and their degrees. Most of the confusion is caused by an indistinct use of terminology. From current literature, university websites and higher education conferences, we find a whole list of terms that in some way relate to joint programmes and their degrees. In addition to *joint programmes*, *joint degrees* and *multiple degrees*, a whole list of confusing terms are being used. To name just a few: collaborative programmes, dual degrees, integrated programmes, double degrees and common degrees. None of these terms have an agreed meaning and therefore mean different things in different contexts.

To begin clarifying the concepts used and to come to a more or less common ground for terminology, we need to first distinguish between a programme and a degree.

### PROGRAMME

The Lisbon Recognition Convention has a clear and relevant definition of a programme:

*“A programme refers to a higher education curriculum leading to a degree. It has co-ordinated elements (courses). The completion of a programme provides the student with a higher education qualification.”<sup>5</sup>*

A detailed definition has been proposed by UNESCO’s International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED):

*“A coherent set or sequence of educational activities designed and organized to achieve pre-determined learning objectives or accomplish a specific set of educational tasks over a sustained period. Within an educational programme, educational activities may also be grouped into sub-components variously described in national contexts as ‘courses’, ‘modules’, ‘units’, and/or ‘subjects’. A programme may have major components not normally characterized as courses,*

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<sup>5</sup> Council of Europe. 1997. *Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region*, p. 4

*units, or modules – for example, play-based activities, periods of work experience, research projects and the preparation of dissertations.”<sup>6</sup>*

From both definitions it will be clear that a programme refers to teaching and learning activities.

## DEGREE

The most simple definition of a degree would be:

*“A higher education qualification.”<sup>7</sup>*

A more comprehensive definition of a degree is put forward by UNESCO’s ISCED:

*“Educational qualification awarded upon successful completion of specific educational programmes in tertiary education (traditionally by universities and equivalent institutions).”<sup>8</sup>*

In both definitions there is a clear link between the degree and a qualification: a degree is a qualification at higher education level. The most authoritative definition of a qualification is included in the Lisbon Recognition Convention:

*“Any degree, diploma or other certificate issued by a competent authority attesting the successful completion of a higher education programme.”<sup>9</sup>*

A qualification is here a broader concept than degree since it also includes diplomas and certificates. UNESCO’s ISCED has elaborated on this and specifies:

*“Qualifications can be obtained through: i) successful completion of a full programme; ii) successful completion of a stage of a programme (intermediate qualifications); or iii) validation of acquired knowledge, skills and competencies, independent of participation in such programmes.”<sup>10</sup>*

From all these definitions it is however clear that a degree refers to the award, the element that provides evidence of successful completion of a programme.

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<sup>6</sup> UNESCO. 2011. *International Standard Classification of Education*, p. 79.

<http://www.uis.unesco.org/Education/Pages/international-standard-classification-of-education.aspx>

<sup>7</sup> Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education. 2012. *Glossary*, <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/AboutUs/glossary>

<sup>8</sup> UNESCO. 2011. *Ibid.* p. 83.

<sup>9</sup> Council of Europe. 1997. *Ibid.*, p. 4

<sup>10</sup> UNESCO. 2011. *Ibid.* p. 83.

## JOINT PROGRAMME

The term joint programme is widely used but not clearly defined. The European University Association's *Guidelines for quality enhancement in European joint master programmes* refers to joint programmes as:

*“Programmes which are developed and implemented jointly by several institutions in different countries.”<sup>11</sup>*

This definition focuses on development and implementation. It doesn't focus on the programme as included in the definitions above. If we look at the definition of a programme included in the Lisbon Recognition Convention, there seem to be three essential elements that make up a programme: (1) a higher education curriculum with (2) co-ordinated elements (courses) which (3) leads to a degree. A joint programme is a programme of which the curriculum is coordinated and offered jointly by two or more institutions and which leads to a degree. That puts the focus on the joint offering or delivery and not necessarily on the development and implementation. In its *Principles for Accreditation Procedures regarding Joint Programmes* the European Consortium for Accreditation in higher education puts forward the following definition:

*“A joint programme is a programme offered jointly by different higher education institutions irrespective of the degree awarded.”<sup>12</sup>*

This definition is quite uncomplicated and seems to suit the reality of the European Higher Education Area. But it is perhaps too straightforward to capture the complex reality. A better definition for a joint programme can therefore be formulated. **A joint programme is defined as follows:**

*“An integrated curriculum coordinated and offered jointly by different higher education institutions and leading to a (double/multiple or joint) degree.”*

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<sup>11</sup> **European University Association.** 2006. *EMNEM - Guidelines for quality enhancement in European joint master programmes.*

<sup>12</sup> **European Consortium for Accreditation in higher education.** 2007. *Principles for accreditation procedures regarding joint programmes*, p. 1.

## JOINT DEGREE

The Recommendation on the Recognition of Joint Degrees<sup>13</sup> gives the following definition of the term joint degree:

*“A joint degree should, for the purposes of this Recommendation, be understood as referring to a higher education qualification issued jointly by at least two or more higher education institutions or jointly by one or more higher education institutions and other awarding bodies, on the basis of a study programme developed and/or provided jointly by the higher education institutions, possibly also in cooperation with other institutions.*

*A joint degree may be issued as*

- a) a joint diploma in addition to one or more national diplomas;*
- b) a joint diploma issued by the institutions offering the study programme in question without being accompanied by any national diploma;*
- c) one or more national diplomas issued officially as the only attestation of the joint qualification in question.”*

It is generally understood that this definition has tried to capture all the types of documents awarded by joint programmes.

Part a) of the definition seems to indicate that institutions involved award two degrees: a national degree and a joint degree. It is unlikely that both these degrees would be acknowledged as the nationally recognised higher education qualification. This type of joint award is now referred to as **a cover certificate**. The institutions award their own national degrees and in addition they award a cover certificate jointly. The cover certificate is however not a recognised award, the underlying national degrees are.

Part b) of the definition is now commonly understood to refer to **a joint degree**.

Part c) of the definition is nowadays regarded as the award of a single or **a multiple degree**.

The Methodological Report<sup>11</sup> of ENQA’s TEEP II project<sup>14</sup> also assessed the validity of the Recommendation’s definition and reported that the definitions do not take into account

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<sup>13</sup> **Committee of the Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications.** 2004. *Recommendation on the Recognition of Joint Degrees.*

<sup>14</sup> **ENQA.** 2006. *Methodological report of the Transnational European Evaluation Project II*, p. 10

the legality of the diploma or the document(s) issued. The report concluded that *“the definitions in the Recommendation are therefore not as widely accepted as they could have been”*.

The Methodological Report of the TEEP II project therefore proposed its own definition of a joint degree:

*“A joint diploma issued by the institutions offering a joint programme in place of all the national diplomas, attesting the successful completion of this joint programme.”*

This definition brings us closer to the current realities of joint qualifications or joint degrees across Europe. We can see the following characteristics:

- A joint degree is awarded after successful completion of a joint programme;
- The joint degree is awarded jointly by higher education institutions that offer the programme (but not necessarily by all);
- The institutions involved in the joint degree do not award any other (national) degree indicating that the awarded joint degree is nationally acknowledged as the recognised award of the joint programme;
- The joint degree is the recognised and only attestation of the qualification.

We can therefore conclude that **a joint degree is defined as follows:**

*“A single document awarded by higher education institutions offering the joint programme and nationally acknowledged as the recognised award of the joint programme.”*

### **MULTIPLE DEGREE**

In the case of a multiple degree, it is agreed that separate documents are awarded after successful completion of a joint programme. The higher education institutions involved in the joint programme therefore don't award a degree jointly but award their own degree individually. One of these degrees can however be a joint degree. In such a case a multiple degree is a combination of a joint degree and (a) national degree(s). Each degree is nationally and separately acknowledged as the recognised award of the joint programme.

**A multiple degree is defined as follows:**

*“Separate degrees awarded by higher education institutions offering the joint programme attesting the successful completion of this programme.”*

#### **DOUBLE DEGREE**

Double degrees are understood to be two degrees awarded after successful completion of a joint programme. It is however recommended to refer to these two documents as a multiple degree. This avoids the confusion brought about by the concept dual degrees. **A double degree is defined as follows:**

*“Two degrees awarded by higher education institutions offering the joint programme attesting the successful completion of this programme.”*

#### **DUAL DEGREE**

Although the concept dual degree is in regular use at American higher education institutions, there doesn't seem to be an agreed definition. The following definition is put forward by Georgia State University:

*“Dual degree programs include separate, but affiliated degree programs that are linked through shared curricular offerings and collaborative administrative processes. Dual degrees may be awarded concurrently or one degree may be awarded prior to the second. A dual degree program should be differentiated from a joint degree.”<sup>15</sup>*

The following characteristics are however prevalent in all definitions: two programmes form the basis for awarding the dual degree, the curricula of these programmes are not integrated<sup>16</sup> and a graduate receives two separate degrees.

It is important to note here that dual degrees can also be offered by the same institution. The definition above might not make that immediately clear. The definition used by the University of Queensland actually limits dual degree programmes to its own institution:

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<sup>15</sup> Georgia State University, *Glossary*, <http://www.gsu.edu/apguide/glossary.html>.

<sup>16</sup> Temple University, *Academic Program Definitions*, <http://www.temple.edu/provost/aaa/academic-proposals/aaa-academicprogramdefinitions.htm>

*“A combination of two UQ degree programs undertaken at the same time which have a single set of program rules.”<sup>17</sup>*

The most recent definition for a dual degree was published by Kris Olds on Inside Higher Ed, the online website for higher education news:

*“Students complete the requirements for two degrees from two institutions, with efficiencies in course taking. Each institution is primarily responsible for its own degree.”<sup>18</sup>*

From these definitions we can conclude that dual degrees are actually not awarded by joint programmes. Dual degrees are therefore awarded by two programmes separately and these two programmes have some coordination and coordinated elements but haven't integrated their curriculum. **A dual degree is defined as follows:**

*“Two degrees awarded individually, attesting the successful completion of two separate curricula, with potential overlap and efficiencies in course-taking, and, if more than one institution is involved, each institution is primarily responsible for its own degree.”*

#### **A MISLEADING CONCEPT: THE JOINT DEGREE PROGRAMME**

The concept joint degree programme is misleading. Is a joint degree programme a degree programme offered jointly or a (joint) programme which awards a joint degree?

What is nowadays commonly referred to as *a programme* used to be more regularly referred to as either a *degree programme* or a *degree course*. Both these terms are actually still in use. North-American authorities<sup>19</sup> and UNESCO's ISCED on the one hand still refer to *degree programmes*. In the case of ISCED, this is probably a leftover of the original versions since the glossary no longer includes a definition for degree programme and now refers to (educational) programme. The term *degree course* on the other hand is still regularly used by institutions and authorities in the UK.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>17</sup> **The University of Queensland**, Dictionary of UQ terminology, <http://www.uq.edu.au/study/index.html?page=116591#D>

<sup>18</sup> **Olds, Kris**. 2011. *What are international dual and joint degrees*, Inside Higher Ed, [http://www.insidehighered.com/blogs/globalhighered/what\\_are\\_international\\_dual\\_joint\\_degrees](http://www.insidehighered.com/blogs/globalhighered/what_are_international_dual_joint_degrees). Retrieved: 1 November 2012.

<sup>19</sup> Example: **Indiana College Network**. 2007. *Glossary*. <http://www.icn.org/about/glossary.html>

<sup>20</sup> **Higher Education Funding Council for England**. *Glossary*. <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/glossary/#letterD>

In all its official publications, the Bologna Process now consistently refers to *joint programmes* and not to joint degree programmes.



## Annex: Outline for the Diploma Supplement

*This Diploma Supplement model was developed by the European Commission, Council of Europe and UNESCO/CEPES. The purpose of the supplement is to provide sufficient independent data to improve the international ‘transparency’ and fair academic and professional recognition of qualifications (diplomas, degrees, certificates etc.). It is designed to provide a description of the nature, level, context, content and status of the studies that were pursued and successfully completed by the individual named on the original qualification to which this supplement is appended. It should be free from any value judgements, equivalence statements or suggestions about recognition. Information in all eight sections should be provided. Where information is not provided, an explanation should give the reason why.*

### **1 INFORMATION IDENTIFYING THE HOLDER OF THE QUALIFICATION**

- 1.1 Family name(s):
- 1.2 Given name(s):
- 1.3 Date of birth (*day/month/year*):
- 1.4 Student identification number or code (*if available*):

### **2 INFORMATION IDENTIFYING THE QUALIFICATION**

- 2.1 Name of qualification and (*if applicable*) title conferred (*in original language*):
- 2.2 Main field(s) of study for the qualification:
- 2.3 Name and status of awarding institution (*in original language*):
- 2.4 Name and status of institution (*if different from 2.3*) administering studies (*in original language*):
- 2.5 Language(s) of instruction/examination:

### **3 INFORMATION ON THE LEVEL OF THE QUALIFICATION**

- 3.1 Level of qualification:
- 3.2 Official length of programme:
- 3.3 Access requirements(s)

### **4 INFORMATION ON THE CONTENTS AND RESULTS GAINED**

- 4.1 Mode of study:
- 4.2 Programme requirements:
- 4.3 Programme details: (e.g. modules or units studied), and the individual grades/marks/credits obtained: (*if this information is available on an official transcript this should be used here*)
- 4.4 Grading scheme and, if available, grade distribution guidance:
- 4.5 Overall classification of the qualification (*in original language*):

### **5 INFORMATION ON THE FUNCTION OF THE QUALIFICATION**

- 5.1 Access to further study:
- 5.2 Professional status (*if applicable*):

### **6 ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

- 6.1 Additional information:
- 6.2 Further information sources:

### **7 CERTIFICATION OF THE SUPPLEMENT**

- 7.1 Date:
- 7.2 Signature:
- 7.3 Capacity:
- 7.4 Official stamp or seal:

### **8 INFORMATION ON THE NATIONAL HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM**

*(N.B. Institutions who intend to issue Diploma Supplements should refer to the explanatory notes that explain how to complete them.)*

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european consortium for accreditation

[www.eacaconsortium.net](http://www.eacaconsortium.net)

[www.grossroads.eu](http://www.grossroads.eu)