

AUDIT OF THE UNIVERSITY OF LJUBLJANA

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4.1 The quality assurance of joint educational offer

- Korkeakoulun itsearviointi

[The Internationalisation Strategy of the University of Ljubljana \(UL\) 2014-2017 \(2020\)](#) (in Slovene) prioritised internationalisation in joint study programmes.

The UL accredited the first joint programmes in 2007. Joint programmes represent the most integrated and complex form of cooperation in education between higher education institutions from different countries. UL have faced various challenges and sought solutions since the accreditation of the first joint programmes, to accommodate different national frameworks in partner institutions' countries. Despite numerous efforts at the European level and initiatives to simplify accreditation procedures and implementation, the situation is not improving as regards joint programmes. Terminology regarding joint programmes still differs among the countries of the European Higher Education Area and therefore joint programmes are regulated differently in national legislations. We encounter numerous administrative obstacles, which do not encourage cooperation and in certain cases even make it impossible.

In Slovenia, a change of legislation in 2016 enabled the implementation of a [European approach for quality assurance of joint programmes](#). Despite numerous efforts and initiatives on the part of UL, this approach has not been adopted in practice. Accreditation of joint programme still takes place in parallel or consecutively, depending on national or institutional rules of participating partner institutions, which is time-consuming and administratively exhausting.

We consider UL to be the most important player in Slovenia's higher education area as regards joint programmes, since it has the largest number of joint programmes, which differ from each other in view of their structure, management and implementation. The latter depends on the

number and the country that partner institutions come from. UL has by far the most experience in this field – according to the SQAA public record of accredited joint programmes it is the only institution in the country with a broad range of experience. Despite this, the initiatives and proposals which UL addresses to the SQAA, based on its considerable experience in this field, as it actively strives to achieve a flexible and competitive arrangement of the national system, fall on deaf ears. With the recent changes to its criteria in January 2023 ([Criteria for International Cooperation](#)), the SQAA placed additional barriers on procedures relating to the accreditation and development of joint programmes and increased their regulation.

At the institutional level, the UL adopted several guidelines based on both experience and developments in this field. The currently applicable guidance for preparation and accreditation of joint programmes at the UL are part of the document Instructions for the management of degree study programmes of the UL – Annex 2: Rules of procedure for designing joint study programmes (available in the intranet).

Joint educational offering at the UL

Currently, [one bachelor's](#), [nine joint master's programmes](#) and [one joint doctoral programme](#) are accredited at the UL. Previously UL had 17 accredited joint programmes, yet in individual cases cooperation has terminated for various reasons, which enabled UL to gain additional valuable experience.

In 2020 a brief analysis of the status of joint programmes at the UL was carried out, analysing the self-evaluation reports of joint programmes at the UL for two academic years (2017/2018 and 2018/2019). This examined the main strengths and weaknesses, the relevance of the content of the study programmes and their course units, and the quality of the teaching process.

The analysis revealed that the self-evaluation reports did not fully define or identify the characteristics that would be required for adequate assessments to be made, as the ones used were generic for all programmes, and no specific methodology was used in the self-evaluation for the joint programmes.

The following key findings on the status of joint programmes were obtained:

- 1) Three of the joint programmes ([EMTM](#), [TRIBOS](#) and [EMA](#)) show strong coherence and alignment with the consortium, along with ongoing, systematic, pre-established periodic self-evaluations, follow-up on results, and other effective measures. In this respect, they differ significantly from the other joint programmes. These three programmes reflect a high level of awareness with regard to the importance of and concern for quality in the implementation of the curriculum.
- 2) In terms of the number of open enrollment slots, the number of students enrolled, and the number of applicants, three joint programmes stand out: [EMTM](#), [TRIBOS](#) and [CogSci](#).
- 3) The four joint programmes of the UL Faculty of Arts show exceptional diligence and a high

level of awareness with regard to the importance of quality in the implementation of the curriculum (among individual departments and administrators/coordinators), although with less coordination at the level of the consortium. They can be seen as programmes that show a high degree of potential, but need further support in terms of evaluating study effectiveness and in areas where there is evidence of inadequate funding, staffing, and resources.

The key steps that should be taken are as follows:

- The elimination of bureaucratic formalities related to the accreditation of joint programmes.
- A revised definition of joint programmes and procedures for the accreditation of joint programmes, adapted to the nature of the activities of a given consortium of universities for a given programme.
- The introduction of flexible forms of joint programmes from the point of view of the student, and not accreditation.
- Efforts to improve the promotion and sustainability of joint programmes.

Strengths

Established sustainable cooperation in joint programmes (EMTM, TRIBOS, CogSci) with a high level of awareness of the importance and use of quality assurance mechanisms.

A broad perception of the scope of joint programmes and/or joint educational offering, and thus the development of more flexible forms of cooperation in education, regardless of any obstacles in national legislation.

The resilience of some joint programmes and other forms of cooperation despite the obstacles faced.

Enhancement areas

Further efforts to align national legislation and thus simplify procedures and create a more flexible and competitive national system for joint programmes.

Promoting cooperation with partner institutions in more flexible ways.