EuroMACHS
Network for European Digital Media Arts and Cultural Heritage Studies

EUROPEAN MASTER PROGRAMME IN

**EUROPEAN HERITAGE
DIGITAL MEDIA
AND THE INFORMATION SOCIETY**

QUALITY ASSURANCE STRATEGY

VERSION 1

EuroMACHS

Quality Assurance Strategy

Introduction

This document describes the Quality Assurance Policy of the EuroMACHS network. It starts by defining the *Mission* of the network, because a quality assurance policy requires a clear statement of the goals that it servers. It then states the network commitment to *Quality enhancement* and how quality is perceived as a on going process and not a static set of procedures. The *specific aims and goals* related to Quality are stated next. The successive section will introduce the basic *processes and principles* in which the Quality Assurance Mechanisms are based. The last three sections deals with the more practical aspects of quality *Indicators, Documentation* and *Responsibilities.*

Mission and values

The Mission of the EuroMACHS network is promoting the integration of knowledge of European Cultural Heritage with current developments in ITC, Digital Media, Intellectual Property Rights and their commercial implications, by creating high quality study programmes and projects capable of meeting the needs for new professional and new content in the Information Society. In this context the EuroMACHS network is particularly committed to the delivery of an European Masters Programme on European Heritage, Digital Media and the Information Society.

EuroMACHS institutions share a set of common principles and values that shape their approach to teaching and learning in their area of expertise:
   • The concept that content production for the new digital media is a central problem in contemporary societies, where the development of ICT creates increasing need for sophisticated and interactive content.
   • The belief that people with a background in Humanities, knowledge of the relevant technologies and high level generic competences in project design and management can be central actors of the emerging new media.
   • A common approach that is based on interdisciplinary programmes with a strongly practical, project oriented methodology.

Commitment to Quality Enhancement

The universities of EuroMACHS understand that Quality in programme delivery is a continuous process, that relies not only in adequate standards and resources but mainly in continuous monitoring and development. We therefore commit ourselves to a ongoing quality enhancement strategy as defined here.

Aims and Goals Related to Quality

The aims and goals are the following:
- The general aim of the QA is to ensure that the overarching objectives of the programme are met in the best possible way with the available resources
- The programme should be able to evolve and improve following changes in social needs, new opportunities and challenges.
- The programme aims at attracting high quality students from diverse academic, national and cultural backgrounds.

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Processes and tools

In this section the main processes and tools involved in Quality Assurance are described.

The Study Guide as a reference for the programme.

As the programme evolves, basic definition of aims might be improved, courses and learning outcomes refined, roles of specific elements like the internship and thesis be also expanded.

The role of the Study Guide is to expose as fully as possible these elements, making them known to the community. In the context of this policy we consider the Study Guide the reference document for these elements. All clarifications and modifications of the programme goals, strategies and composition must be reflected in the Guide.

The study Guide is the main repository for the most updated version of the following elements:
- The aims and goals of the programme.
- The expected learning outcomes at a global level.
- The structure and strategy of the curriculum.
- The specific role and contribution of each partner.
- Academic standards.
- Course descriptions according to the ECTS Guidelines.
- Entry level requirements.

The role of feed back mechanisms

Feed back mechanisms that allow the students to express their view on the programme anonymously are an important part of Quality Assurance Processes.

Students should be given the opportunity to answer comprehensive questionnaires about the programme. In the first year of implementation of the EuroMACHS Master the University of Turku promoted the creation of such a questionnaire. Students were given the opportunity to contribute to the questions and comment on then. The end result, included in appendix 1 of this document, was activated online in the summer of 2007. The answers,

from 12 of the 13 students that followed the programme are in appendix 2. The answers, and specially the thoughtful suggestions in the final question, prove the value of these mechanisms.

The programme review, twice a year.

In the first year of implementation the partners produced two short reports assessing the implementation of the programme and making recommendations for improvement in the next delivery. This should be a regular practice of the quality enhancement procedures of the programme.

The main goal of the first report is to assess the first semester, in particular the usage of the online seminar and e-learning platform. It will also allow a common discussion and information sharing about the students in the context of the mobility period that follows.

The first report should include:
- An assessment of the intake of students of the current year, in terms of number, quality and specific competencies or shortfalls.
- An evaluation of the on-line activities related to the common seminar, including, if necessary, decisions about corrections and changes for the next edition.
- An assessment of the mobility patterns of the current year.

The main goal of the second report is to assess the second semester, or mobility period
The second report should include:
- An evaluation of the mobility period, of the difficulties encountered and ways to correct them.
- An overview of the possibilities of joint supervision of thesis.
- A retrospective overview of the previous delivery of the programme in terms of thesis presented and questions related to supervision.

Ideally these two reports would be the result of meetings of the institutional coordinators. If face-to-face meetings are not possible, then a videoconference for the discussion of the main point of the reports should be arranged. Each partner should draft a contribution to each report with the programme coordinator producing a consolidated version.

Benchmarking.

In order to remain competitive EuroMACHS should monitor programmes that aim at the same potential candidates and/or share a similar approach to social needs.
It is important to analyze similar projects, not only for what can be learned but also to assess the relative success of our proposal.

A short list of such programmes should be compiled. Whenever possible information should be gathered about student intake, curricular contents, teaching and learning strategies and portfolios of student projects.

The coordinator of EuroMACHS will produce an overview report on the benchmarking exercise, taking into account suggestions from the partners about relevant programmes.

Adequate marketing strategies.

The aim of attracting high quality students implies that an adequate marketing strategy exists. Thanks to the initial support of the European Commission EuroMACHS has produced high quality marketing materials.

It is equally important that an articulated marketing plan is put in place at each partner, in order to disseminate the existing materials, complement them with local information.

In this context it is important that each partner designs a marketing plan that aims not only at their own first cycle students but that takes advantage of existing possibilities of attracting other students from the same country or others.

Use of ICT infrastructure, Erasmus Mobility.

In a joint master programme the ability to put into contact teachers and students of different institutions is crucial. Currently this can only be obtained through mobility of students of staff and the usage of ICT for "virtual mobility":

It is very important that these two tools are used in an articulated manner. This means ensuring that the necessary mobility is planned before hand and that the timing of the mobility is relevant in the overall logic of the programme. It also means that the online e-learning platform and video conferencing should be used intensively.

One of the aspects that should deserve special attention in the review reports mentioned above is an assessment of the usage of ICT and mobility and how it could be improved.

Use of ECTS concepts and guidelines

Usage of ECTS concepts and guidelines is an essential part of the quality assurance of higher education educational practices in general and of joint programmes in particular. EuroMACHS will aim at following the ECTS good practices as stated in the ECTS guide, specially in the assembly of the information of the Study Guide and in the correct usage of the concepts of workload based credits and the ECTS grading scale.

Indicators

EuroMACHS will aim at monitoring a certain number of indicators on a regular basis in order to obtain a view of the quality aspects of the programme that can be compared over time. Altough the programme takes a relatively small amount of students (maximum 40 students with currently defined quotas) it is good practice to try to obtain some quantification of the achievement of quality goals.

The programme might also want to implement some types of uniform assessment tests to measure the level of students. For instance, an entry level assessment of the computer skills of the students each year would be a valuable instrument for quality management if it could be reliably implemented.

This is an area where periodical review will certainly incorporate changes in the future.

A first list of possible indicators is the following:
- Number of students enrolled each year.
- Characteristics of new students (see annex 3).
- ECTS marks after the first semester.
- Ratio of mobility students against total students enrolled.
- Average duration of mobility periods.
- ECTS marks in the second semester.
- Activity levels on the online learning platform.

This indicators should be monitored and be included, along with comments and necessary actions, in the review reports done each year.

Documentation

The Quality Assurance strategy is supported by the following documents:
- The present document, which defines the overall approach.
- The Study Guide than contains the programme specifications as stated above,
- The new student questionnaire and the feed back questionnaire.
- The review reports describe above.
- The consortium agreement that may incorporate binding responsibilities regarding Quality Assurance.

All these document are accessible to all participants and stakeholders of the programme: academic staff, students, administrators, academic authorities.

Responsibilities

The responsibility for the implementation and review of the Quality Assurance procedures lies with the programme steering committee, which includes the coordinator and two members of each partner institution (including the coordinating institution), It is advised that one member of each institution have a relevant administrative role. The tasks of the steering committee are:

- Insure the implementation of the guidelines included in this document.
- Review and change this document as needed.
- Organize the production of the review reports.
- Ensure that online questionnaires are filled by the students.
- Organize the collection of the quality indicators.

Each institutional coordinator has the following responsibilities regarding Quality Assurance of the joint programme at local level:
- Gather the indicators specified in the common Quality Assurance policy.
- Stimulate the students to answer the common questionnaires.
- Contribute to the common review reports with information.
- Take the necessary actions when issues are detected at the institutional level through the Quality Assurance mechanisms (questionnaires, indicators).
- Forward to the consortium any relevant results of local Quality Assurance procedures (e.g. national accreditation reviews).

Annexes

Annex 1: Feed back questionnaire (end of first year).
Annex 2: Answers to feed back questionnaire.
Annex 3: New students questionnaire.
Annex 4: Answers to new student questionnaire.

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