

**GUIDELINES FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF INITIAL ACCREDITATION
OF INTERNATIONAL JOINT STUDY PROGRAMMES
WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE EUROPEAN APPROACH TO QUALITY ASSURANCE
(EUROPEAN APPROACH)**

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Index

Introduction.....	3
1. The European Approach to Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes	3
1.1 Joint programmes.....	3
1.2 The foundations of the European Approach: standards and evaluation procedure	4
2. Context and role of ANVUR	7
2.1 Regulatory and legislative framework.....	7
2.1.1 Accreditation of joint programmes in the national context using the EA.....	7
2.1.2 Evaluations conducted by other agencies using the EA and ANVUR's role	9
2.2 Evaluation procedure	10
APPENDIX A – EA ACCREDITATION STANDARDS	14
APPENDIX B – EA ACCREDITATION PROCEDURE	17

Introduction

The *European Higher Education Area (EHEA)*¹ adopts various approaches to external quality assurance, such as accreditation, evaluation, or audits at both institutional and programme levels. These approaches, while adapted to their respective contexts, share a common foundation in the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)*² which are applicable to all institutions and programmes, including joint programmes. The ESG facilitate the recognition of programmes across Europe and foster trust among higher education institutions.

The standards of the European approach for quality assurance of joint programmes³ were adopted in 2015 by the EHEA ministers during the ministerial Conference held in Yerevan in May 2015. The European Approach (EA) enables **institutions opting to use it** to request a **specific procedure for accrediting joint programmes**, reducing redundancies and bureaucratic burdens associated with different national approaches.

This model is adopted by ANVUR in accordance with the **General Guidelines for the 2024–2026 Triennial Planning**⁴ issued by the Ministry of University and Research. Annex 4, section B of the Ministerial Decree (DM) specifies that ANVUR, “for the purposes of the initial and periodic accreditation of international programmes leading to joint or multiple degrees, including those within university alliances, [...] may adopt European models developed and shared for the management of evaluation procedures by a single quality assurance agency among those listed in the EQAR register.”

In line with these provisions, the model applies to the initial accreditation of first cycle (bachelor's degree) and second cycle (master's degree) joint programmes, starting from the 2025/2026 academic year, where the use of the EA is requested by the coordinating institution. For the purposes of ministerial accreditation of international joint programmes, the evaluation procedure based on the EA must be coordinated by an agency listed in the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR); once registered in EQAR, ANVUR will also be able to coordinate the evaluation and accreditation of these programmes.

1. The European Approach to Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes

1.1 Joint programmes

Joint programmes are a hallmark of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA)⁵. Within the framework of the European Approach (EA), a “joint programme” is defined as an integrated curriculum, coordinated and jointly offered by higher education institutions from two or more EHEA⁶ countries, leading to the awarding of either double/multiple degrees or a single joint degree. The main objectives of joint programmes are to enhance

¹ <https://ehea.info/>

² <https://www.enqa.eu/esg-standards-and-guidelines-for-quality-assurance-in-the-european-higher-education-area/> ESG should be revised by 2027, and the European Approach revision would follow

³ <https://www.eqar.eu/kb/joint-programmes/>

⁴ Ministry Decree 10 June 2024, n. 773

<https://www.mur.gov.it/sites/default/files/2024-07/Decreto%20Ministeriale%20n.%20773%20del%2010-06-2024.pdf>

⁵ “Joint programmes are a hallmark of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA)”

https://www.eqar.eu/assets/uploads/2018/04/European_Approach_QA_of_Joint_Programmesv1_0-2015.pdf

⁶ “This proposal relates only to joint programmes offered jointly by higher education institutions from two or more countries and does not address the quality assurance of programmes delivered jointly by different institutions from a single country.” European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes October 2014 approved by EHEA ministers in May 2015

international mobility for students and staff, facilitate mutual learning and cooperation opportunities, encourage the design and delivery of high-quality educational pathways. Below are definitions clarifying the terms “joint programme,” “joint degree,” and “double/multiple degrees”:

Joint degree: an **integrated, coordinated and jointly offered study** path by different higher education institutions of the EHEA countries and which results in the issuance of double/multiple degrees or a joint degree

Joint degree/diploma: a **single degree** issued by the higher education institutions offering the joint programme and nationally recognised as a certification of the joint programme

Double/multiple degrees: separate degrees awarded by the participating higher education institutions, certifying the successful completion of the joint programme. When two degrees are issued by two institutions, it is referred to as a “double degree”

Joint and double/multiple degrees can generally be established by consortia of higher education institutions, including—but not limited to—those formed under the *European University Initiative*⁷.

Key considerations:

- the EA applies only to joint programmes offered by higher education institutions from two or more countries and does not cover quality assurance of programmes jointly delivered by multiple institutions within a single country.
- the recognition type obtained by students enrolled in joint programmes will depend on the national regulatory frameworks of the countries where the participating institutions operate.

1.2 The foundations of the European Approach: standards and evaluation procedure

The European Approach (EA) was developed to facilitate and simplify the design and external quality assurance of newly established joint programmes. Specifically, the EA:

- **promotes the application of an integrated approach to the quality assurance** of joint programmes, reflecting and enhancing their collaborative nature;
- **establishes a single accreditation standard** based on shared tools within the EHEA (such as ESG and national qualifications frameworks) without imposing additional national criteria.
- **supports the harmonization of differing quality assurance approaches**, by addressing variations in institutional or curricular practices, the authority of agencies to operate abroad, evaluation procedures, result management, and accreditation cycles.
- **reduces bureaucratic burdens**, redundancies, fragmentation, and contradictions between various national models.

External quality assurance of joint programmes using the EA is the responsibility of quality assurance agencies listed in the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR).

Only evaluations conducted by these agencies will be recognized by ANVUR for

⁷ <https://education.ec.europa.eu/education-levels/higher-education/european-universities-initiative>

accreditation purposes⁸.

The EA enables higher education institutions to follow a **single, integrated procedure** to obtain accreditation for a joint programme, thus **eliminating the need for multiple accreditations**. According to the EA, one quality assurance agency—designated in agreement with the institutions forming the consortium proposing the programme—is responsible for the evaluation. The evaluation outcomes are recognized by the national authorities of all the institutions involved in the delivery of the joint programme, as well as by national authorities across the entire EHEA.

The standards and procedure underlying the evaluation conducted under the EA are aligned with the ESG, as shown in the following tables (Tables 1 and 2⁹).

Table 1: Correspondence between ESG and standards of the EA

ESG 2015	Standard per l'Approccio Europeo
	1. Eligibility
1.2 Design and approval of programmes	2. Learning outcomes 3. Study programme
1.4 Student Admission, progression, recognition, and certification	4. Admission and recognition
1.3 Student-Centred learning, teaching, and assessment	5. Learning, teaching and assessment
1.6 Learning resources and student support	6. Student support
1.5 Teaching staff 1.6 Learning resources and student support	7. Resources
1.8 Public information	8. Transparency and documentation
1.1 Policy for quality assurance & part 1 of ESG	9. Quality assurance
1.7 Information Management 1.9 On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes 1.10 Cyclical external quality assurance	Not addressed yet for initial accreditation

⁸ This model does not apply to joint university programmes with countries whose agencies are not part of the register or have no quality assessment agencies, for which specific arrangements will be required

⁹ European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes October 2014 approved by EHEA ministers in May 2015

Table 2: Correspondence between ESG and the evaluation procedure according to the EA

ESG 2015	Evaluation procedure according to the European Approach
2.3 Implementing processes	1. Self-Evaluation Report
2.3 Implementing processes 2.4 Peer-review experts	2. Review Panel
2.3 Implementing processes	3. Site visit
2.3 Implementing processes 2.6 Reporting	4. Review Report
2.5 Criteria for outcomes	5. Formal outcomes and decisions
2.7 Complaints and appeals	6. Appeals
2.6 Reporting	7. Reporting
2.3 Implementing processes	8. Follow-up
1.10 Cyclical external quality assurance	9. Periodicity
2.1 Consideration of internal quality assurance 2.2 Designing methodologies fit for purpose	Not verified yet during initial accreditation procedures

As shown in Table 1, the evaluation based on the European Approach consists of 9 standards, described in APPENDIX A.

For each standard, the expert panel conducting the evaluation provides one of the following judgments:

- **substantial compliance:** the programme meets the standards, and their implementation is effective.
- **partial compliance:** only certain aspects or points of the standards are met; their interpretation is correct, but their implementation is not sufficiently effective.
- **non-compliance:** the programme does not meet the standards.

When formulating a judgment of substantial or partial compliance, the panel may express specific conditions and/or recommendations. Lastly, the panel proposes a final judgment of accreditation or non-accreditation. The expert report is shared by the agency managing the procedure with the coordinating institution for factual accuracy verification.

If the outcome of the evaluation procedure indicates partial or substantial compliance with the EA standards, ANVUR assesses the validation of the evaluation report by the agency coordinating the QA procedure and formulates a final proposal for accreditation. If the evaluation outcome indicates non-compliance with the EA standards, after validating the evaluation report, ANVUR issues a final opinion of non-accreditation. In all cases, ANVUR's opinion is submitted to the Ministry of University and Research (MUR), which incorporates it into a decree.

If ANVUR acts as the coordinating agency for the evaluation procedure (after being listed in EQAR), it forwards the expert panel evaluation report to other agencies and requests

their validation according to the national regulations of the QA agencies of the institutions jointly offering the programme.

2. Context and role of ANVUR

2.1 Regulatory and legislative framework

In accordance with Legislative Decree No. 19/2012¹⁰ and subsequent administrative provisions, since the academic year 2012/2013, Italy has established a system for the initial and periodic accreditation of study programmes and institutions.

ANVUR is tasked with defining the criteria, indicators, and verification methods for the initial and periodic accreditation of universities and their study programmes. Accreditation is granted by the Ministry of University and Research (MUR) via a decree aligned with the evaluation provided by ANVUR. The evaluation and accreditation activities are currently governed by Ministerial Decree No. 1154/2021, which aims to ensure that newly established programmes and institutions meet specific requirements over time. According to the *General Guidelines for the 2024–2026 Triennial Planning*, ANVUR may also apply the European model for the accreditation of joint programmes, recognizing evaluations conducted by agencies listed in the EQAR or acting as the coordinating agency once it obtains EQAR registration¹¹.

ANVUR's role concerning the accreditation of international joint programmes includes:

- recognising and validating the evaluation results of a joint international programme involving one or more Italian institutions (potentially in coordinating roles), conducted using the EA by any agency listed in EQAR.
- a) after obtaining EQAR registration, coordinating evaluation procedures for joint programmes conducted using the EA, regardless of whether one or more Italian institutions participate.

In both cases, the validation of the results of the evaluation process carried out under the EA must consider the national criteria and guidelines for the accreditation of joint programmes, as described in the following section.

2.1.1 Accreditation of joint programmes in the national context using the EA

Accreditation of a joint programme using the EA within the Italian context can apply to:

- a) A programme already nationally accredited, where either the entire programme or a portion (e.g., a curriculum) is used as part of a joint programme proposal;
- b) A newly established joint programme, consisting of a set of modules offered by one or more Italian universities that do not belong to pre-existing, nationally accredited programmes.

In the case of subsection (a)

¹⁰ Legislative Decree 27 January 2012, n. 19 "Enhancing the efficiency of universities and consequent introduction of reward mechanisms in the distribution of public resources on the basis of criteria defined ex ante, including by providing for a system of periodic accreditation of universities and The enhancement of the status of permanent researchers not confirmed in their first year of activity; pursuant to Article 5, paragraph 1, letter a), of the law of 30 December 2010, n. 240": <https://www.normattiva.it/uri-res/N2Ls?urn:nir:stato:decreto.legislativo:2012;019>

¹¹ The procedure is adopted when the national legislation of the countries of the universities involved in the joint course requires external quality assurance at the level of the course.

The study programme has completed the ordinary accreditation procedure, which includes **(i)** obtaining the opinion of the Regional Coordination Committee (CoReCo), **(ii)** prior verification by CUN (National University Council) of the teaching regulations and **(iii)** verification of the teaching requirements by ANVUR (cf. AVA procedure for initial accreditation of newly established programmes). In this case, the Italian institution (or institutions) that intend to apply for the EA give notice to the ANVUR and CUN, which is the last to decide on the equivalence of the teaching system for a national degree class/ interclass.

In the case of subsection (b)

The Italian institutions proposing the programme, after obtaining the positive opinion of the Evaluation Board, informs CUN and ANVUR, which express their views on the areas of competence. CUN evaluates **(i)** the coherence of the group of teaching programmes with which Italian institutions contribute to the joint programme and **(ii)** the equivalence of the overall teaching regulation compared to a national degree class/ interclass. ANVUR verifies the possession of adequate teaching requirements for joint programmes¹², as specified in Table 3 below. No request for CoReCo opinion is foreseen, according to the provisions of DM 773/2024, Annex 4, letter a)¹³.

Considering that the EA results from collaboration among the quality assurance agencies within the EHEA, it must refer, as much as possible, to evaluation systems and programme types that exhibit sufficient homogeneity across international evaluation frameworks. Therefore, in the current **experimental phase**, this model **does not apply** to the following types of study programmes:

- Programmes delivered entirely or predominantly via distance learning.
- Programmes requiring verification of specific infrastructural requirements (e.g., Medicine and Surgery, Dentistry and Dental Prosthetics, Veterinary Medicine, and Health Professions).
- Programmes where the Final examination, beyond its academic value, also serves as direct qualification for a specific profession.

For the above categories, the ordinary accreditation procedure specific to these types of programmes will apply.

¹² "The European Approach should be applied depending on the needs of the cooperating higher education institutions and the requirements of their national frameworks" (European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes... Application in Different Systems of External QA, p. 2).

¹³ In the case of a study programme already accredited at national level that the Italian institution involved intends to transform into an exclusively joint course, it must be deactivated.

Table 3: Teaching Staff Requirements (As per DM 1154/2021 and DD 2711/2021)

Type of Programme	Number of Faculty Members	Notes
Bachelor's Degree	<p>With respect to the 9 professors provided for by DM 1154/2021, at least 5 permanent professors and 4 lecturers are required, of which</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A maximum of 4 faculty members can belong to foreign universities. - A maximum of 2 contract faculty members (per Art. 23, Law 240/2010). - For joint programmes with a single Italian institution: at least 1¹⁴ permanent full or associate professor and 1 researcher employed at the university. <p>For joint programmes with two or more Italian institutions: at least 1 permanent full or associate professor ¹⁵ and 1 researcher employed at each university.</p>	Additional faculty contributions must be proportional to the number of foreign faculty and the Italian institution's teaching commitments in terms of programmed teaching.
Master's Degree	<p>With respect to the 6 professors provided for by DM 1154/2021, at least 4 permanent professors and 2 lecturers are required, of which</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A maximum of 3 faculty members can belong to foreign universities. - A maximum of 1 contract faculty member (per Art. 23, Law 240/2010). <p>For joint programmes with one or more Italian institutions: at least 1 permanent full or associate professor and 1 researcher employed at each university.</p>	Additional faculty contributions must be proportional to the number of foreign faculty and the Italian institution's teaching commitments in terms of programmed teaching.

2.1.2 Evaluations conducted by other agencies using the EA and ANVUR's role

If a consortium of higher education institutions including one or more Italian universities decides to entrust a foreign agency with the task of evaluating through the EA a joint programme as provided for in point 2.1.1 above, a), the procedure to be followed is that indicated in the preceding paragraph. If, however, a joint programme is to be held as provided for in point 2.1.1 b) above, the following procedure shall apply:

¹⁴

If the foreign partner universities provide a total of 4 professors, it is sufficient that the Italian university provides 1 professor

¹⁵

If the foreign partner universities provide a total of 4 professors, it is sufficient that the Italian university provides 1 professor

1. The Italian university (or universities), after identifying the agency responsible for the procedure and before the start of the evaluation carried out by the EA, give notice to MUR, CUN and ANVUR, who express their opinion on the areas of competence. To this end, they upload the necessary information on the joint programme in the dedicated section of the MUR SUA – CDS study programme platform¹⁶.
2. ANVUR and CUN, after receiving the request of the university and verifying the availability of documentation on the platform, express their views on the areas of competence within the first useful meeting and no later than 30 days from the request. The outcome is made available to the university in the SUA-CDS platform and communicated by ANVUR to the Agency responsible for the EA procedure.
3. If the verification of the preliminary requirements is negative, the institutions may submit any counterclaims within 10 days to ANVUR and/or CUN, which must respond with a final opinion within 10 days of receipt of the counterclaims. In the event of a negative final opinion, the results are communicated only to the university that has proposed participation in the joint programme, which will not be able to take part in the consortium.
4. If the preliminary verifications are positive, ANVUR will assess with the coordinating agency whether to identify Italian experts.
5. The coordinating institution of the consortium sends the self-assessment report and any other documentation to the agency selected for the management of the procedure, which carries out the EA evaluation.
6. At the end of the procedure, ANVUR receives the evaluation report from the agency responsible for the procedure coordination and validates its results. The opinion of ANVUR is then forwarded to the MUR for follow-up.

Pending further developments of the European accreditation procedures, ANVUR will follow up within the first three years after accreditation, in agreement with the Agency responsible for it.

2.2 Evaluation procedure

Alignment between the European Approach requirements and the AVA system

The requirements outlined in the AVA system fully correspond to the standards of the EA (see Table 4). This alignment is a prerequisite for automatic recognition of joint programmes within ANVUR's accreditation system when the external review is conducted by an EQAR-registered agency.

¹⁶ For this type of course, the database will remain open, regardless of the annual window for ordinary accreditation of courses.

Table 4. Correspondence between ANVUR's initial accreditation requirements for study programmes and the standards of the EA

ANVUR REQUIREMENTS FOR INITIAL ACCREDITATION	STANDARD FOR THE EUROPEAN APPROACH	ESG PART 1	ESG PART 2
Objective I – quality of programme documentation for establishment Includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summary description of the new programme • References to the national and, where relevant, international context (benchmarking) • Analysis of occupational outcomes • Consultation with stakeholders • Positive evaluation by the evaluation unit 	Standard 1. Eligibility Standard 8. Transparency and documentation	ESG 1.8 Public information	2.1 Consideration of internal quality assurance 2.2 Design and fit for purpose 2.4 Peer-review experts
Objective II – justifications for programme establishment, definition of cultural and professional profiles, and programme structure Verifies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Justifications for the programme establishment • Quality and coherence of the programme's cultural and professional objectives • - Quality of the learning pathway and expected learning outcomes 	Standard 2. Learning outcomes Standard 3. Study programme Standard 5. Learning, teaching and assessment Standard 8. Transparency and documentation	ESG 1.2 Design and approval of ESG 1.3 Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment ESG 1.8 Public information	2.2 Design and fit for purpose 2.3 Implementing processes 2.4 Peer-review experts

ANVUR REQUIREMENTS FOR INITIAL ACCREDITATION	STANDARD FOR THE EUROPEAN APPROACH	ESG PART 1	ESG PART 2
Objective III – student-centred learning Includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Required entry knowledge and remediation of gaps • Methods for verifying knowledge • Entry or ongoing support activities aimed at integration and consolidation of recommended entry-level knowledge • Use of flexible teaching methods • Mobility support 	Standard 3. Study programme Standard 4. Admission and recognition Standard 5. Learning, teaching and assessment Standard 6. Student support	ESG 1.2 Design and approval of programmes ESG 1.3 Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment ESG 1.4 Student admission, progression, recognition and certification ESG 1.6 Learning resources and student support	2.3 Implementing processes 2.5 Criteria for outcomes 2.4 Peer-review experts
Objective IV – allocation of teaching and administrative staff, and structures suitable for teaching needs Includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning resources: materials, infrastructure, services, academic and teaching support staff 	Standard 7. Resources	ESG 1.5 Teaching staff ESG 1.6 Learning resources and student support	2.3 Implementing processes 2.5 Criteria for outcomes 2.4 Peer-review experts

ANVUR REQUIREMENTS FOR INITIAL ACCREDITATION	STANDARD FOR THE EUROPEAN APPROACH	ESG PART 1	ESG PART 2
Programme review and improvement	Standard 8. Transparency and documentation Standard 9. Quality assurance	ESG PART 1 ESG 1.1 Policy for quality assurance ESG 1.7 Information management ESG 1.8 Public information ESG 1.9 On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes ESG 1.10 Cyclical external quality assurance	2.1 Consideration of internal quality assurance 2.6 Reporting 2.7 Complaints and appeals

APPENDIX A – EA ACCREDITATION STANDARDS

Standard 1. Eligibility

1.1 Status

The institutions that offer a joint programme should be recognised as higher education institutions by the relevant authorities of their countries. Their respective national legal frameworks should enable them to participate in the joint programme and, if applicable, to award a joint degree. The institutions awarding the degree(s) should ensure that the degree(s) belong to the higher education degree systems of the countries in which they are based.

1.2 Joint design and delivery

The joint programme should be offered jointly, involving all cooperating institutions in the design and delivery of the programme. Documentation of the programme proposal should include:

- ✓ programme name and duration in years and ECTS credits, with related descriptors in the European Qualifications Framework (EQF-EHEA)
- ✓ objectives and purpose of the programme
- ✓ applicant institution and institutions of the consortium
- ✓ teaching methods and main language of the course
- ✓ number of students expected to be enrolled in the first academic year
- ✓ teaching programme regulations

1.3 Cooperation Agreement

The terms and conditions of the joint programme should be laid down in a cooperation agreement. The agreement should in particular cover the following issues:

- ✓ denomination of the degree(s) awarded in the programme
- ✓ coordination and responsibilities of the partners involved regarding management and financial organisation (including funding, sharing of costs and income etc.)
- ✓ admission and selection procedures for students
- ✓ mobility of students and teachers
- ✓ examination regulations, student assessment methods, recognition of credits and degree awarding procedures in the consortium.

Standard 2. Learning outcomes

2.1 Level [ESG 1.2]

The intended learning outcomes should align with the corresponding level in the Framework for Qualifications in the European Higher Education Area (FQ-EHEA), as well as the applicable national qualifications framework(s).

2.2 Disciplinary field

The intended learning outcomes should comprise knowledge, skills, and competencies in the respective disciplinary field(s).

2.3 Achievement [ESG 1.2]

The programme should be able to demonstrate that the intended learning outcomes are achieved.

2.4 Regulated Professions

If relevant for the specific joint programme, the minimum agreed training conditions specified in the European Union Directive 2005/36/EC, or relevant common trainings frameworks established under the Directive, should be taken into account.

Standard 3. Study Programme [ESG 1.2]

3.1 Curriculum

The structure and content of the curriculum should be fit to enable the students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

3.2 Credits

The European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) should be applied properly and the distribution of credits should be clear.

3.3 Workload

A joint bachelor programme will typically amount to a total student workload of 180-240 ECTS-credits; a joint master programme will typically amount to 90-120 ECTS-credits and should not be less than 60 ECTS-credits at second cycle level (credit ranges according to the FQ-EHEA); for joint doctorates there is no credit range specified. The workload and the average time to complete the programme should be monitored.

Standard 4. Admission and Recognition [ESG 1.4]

4.1 Admission

The admission requirements and selection procedures should be appropriate in light of the programme's level and discipline.

4.2 Recognition

Recognition of qualifications and of periods of studies (including recognition of prior learning) should be applied in line with the Lisbon Recognition Convention and subsidiary documents.

Standard 5. Learning, Teaching and Assessment [ESG 1.3]

5.1 Learning and teaching

The programme should be designed to correspond with the intended learning outcomes, and the learning and teaching approaches applied should be adequate to achieve those. The diversity of students and their needs should be respected and attended to, especially in view of potential different cultural backgrounds of the students.

5.2 Assessment of students

The examination regulations and the assessment of the achieved learning outcomes should correspond with the intended learning outcomes. They should be applied consistently among partner institutions.

Standard 6. Student Support [ESG 1.6]

The student support services should contribute to the achievement of the intended learning outcomes. They should take into account specific challenges of mobile students.

Standard 7. Resources [ESG 1.5 & 1.6]

7.1 Staff

The staff should be sufficient and adequate (qualifications, professional and international experience) to implement the study programme.

7.2 Facilities

The facilities provided should be sufficient and adequate in view of the intended learning outcomes.

Standard 8. Transparency and Documentation [ESG 1.8]

Relevant information about the programme like admission requirements and procedures, course catalogue, examination and assessment procedures etc. should be well documented and published by taking into account specific needs of mobile students.

Standard 9. Quality Assurance [ESG 1.1 & part 1]

The cooperating institutions should apply joint internal quality assurance processes in accordance with part one of the ESG.

APPENDIX B – EA ACCREDITATION PROCEDURE

The application of the European Approach (EA) involves the following steps:

- ✓ selection of a Quality Assurance (QA) Agency. The consortium proposing the joint programme selects a QA agency registered in the EQAR.
- ✓ preparation of a *Self-Evaluation Report (SAR)* jointly presented by the partner institutions, in compliance with ESG 2.3, based on the 9 standards defined by the EA. The report must include:
 - Demonstration of compliance with the EA standards, with appropriate justification for each standard.
 - Information about the national higher education and QA systems of the partner institutions.
 - Description of the distinctive characteristics of the joint programme.
 - Any other specific supporting documents related to the joint programme.
- ✓ On-Site Visit
 - to facilitate discussions with representatives from all participating higher education institutions (students, professors, staff, stakeholders, alumni).
 - normally conducted at a single location, while accounting for contributions from all involved sites.
- ✓ Drafting of the Evaluation Report
 - the panel of experts produces a report in line with ESG 2.3 and 2.6, containing evidence, analysis, conclusions, and recommendations regarding the EA standards and ESG Part II.
 - Specific considerations related to the unique aspects of the joint programme.
- ✓ Sending a draft of the report to partner institutions for any additional comments and corrections of factual errors.
- ✓ Agency's decision on the outcome of the procedure, accompanied by conditions and recommendations [ESG 2.5]
- ✓ Right to Appeal. Partner institutions can appeal the decision through a formalized procedure adopted by the QA agency (ESG 2.7).
- ✓ Publication of the Evaluation Report. The evaluation report is published along with the final decision (ESG 2.6).
 - if the report is not in English, the resolution must be translated into English
 - two months after the publication of the report, institutions can use it to apply for national accreditation
- ✓ A follow-up procedure is agreed upon with the partner institutions (ESG 2.3)

The evaluation achieved is valid for 6 years [ESG 1.10]