

**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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Introduction

The *European Higher Education Area* (EHEA) adopts various approaches to external quality assurance, which share a common foundation in the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) which are applicable to all institutions and programmes (including joint programmes) and are now under revision¹.

The standards of the European approach for quality assurance of joint programmes² 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**³ 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, and to PhDs programmes.

To initiate the process, institutions offering a study program or a joint doctorate and intending to make use of the European Approach (EA) must select an agency from those listed in the EQAR register to carry out the evaluation.

1. The European Approach to Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes and the role of ANVUR

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

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**. External quality assurance of joint programmes using the EA is the responsibility of quality assurance agencies listed in the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR)⁴.

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

¹ ESG actual version was published in 20215: the revised version will entry into force in 2027, and the European Approach revision would follow

² <https://www.eqar.eu/kb/joint-programmes/>

³ 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>

⁴ 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

between various national models.

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 2⁵).

Table 1. Correspondence Between ESG and Standards of the European Approach

ESG 2015	Standard for the European Approach
	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

Table 2. Correspondence between ESG and the evaluation procedure according to the European Approach

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

⁵ Cfr. European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes, October 2014, approved by EHEA ministers in May 2015 https://www.eqar.eu/assets/uploads/2018/04/02_European_Approach_QA_of_Joint_Programmes_v1_0.pdf

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.
- **non conformità:** il corso non rispetta gli standard.

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.

According to the European Approach (EA), the results of the evaluation carried out by the agency responsible for coordinating the procedure will be recognized by the national authorities of all the institutions involved in delivering the joint program and throughout the European Higher Education Area.

1.2 The role of ANVUR

ANVUR is member of **ENQA** (European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education) and it is listed in **EQAR** (European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education), so far it can:

- a) **coordinating** evaluation procedures and accreditation for international joint programmes conducted using the EA, upon request of the institutions presenting the joint programme, regardless of whether one or more Italian institutions participate;
- b) **recognizing** the results of the evaluation carried out by other AQ Agencies listed in EQAR for joint international programme presented by consortia involving one or more Italian institutions conducted using the EA⁶.

In the first case, the institution designated as the lead of the consortium must submit a request to ANVUR to coordinate the evaluation procedure, using the template provided (Annex 1). After carrying out the preliminary checks required for Italian institutions (see below), ANVUR informs the relevant quality assurance (QA) agencies of the institutions jointly offering the study program or doctorate of the assignment received. Upon conclusion of the evaluation, in the case of partial or substantial compliance, ANVUR issues a positive accreditation opinion and sends the Expert Evaluation Report to the aforementioned national QA agencies, for the actions required by the respective national regulations.

In the second case, following the preliminary checks required for Italian institutions, the agency tasked with coordinating the procedure contacts ANVUR to arrange for the possible participation of Italian experts in the procedure. ANVUR will then receive the final Expert Report in order to validate the outcome of the evaluation process and issue its opinion on accreditation.

If the outcome of the evaluation procedure indicates non-compliance with the EA standards, the agency coordinating the procedure (either ANVUR or another foreign agency) will issue a

⁶ Subject to verification of the mandatory requirements for study programs according to national legislation, as specified later in these Guidelines (see point 2).

negative accreditation opinion, which will be communicated to the institution responsible for the consortium presenting the joint program and to the other QA agencies of the participating countries.

In any case the opinion of ANVUR is transmitted to MUR which issues the final decree.

1.3 Regulatory and legislative framework

Annex 4, Section B of Ministerial Decree 773/2024, "**General Guidelines for the 2024–2026 Three-Year Planning**", states that ANVUR, "for the purposes of initial and periodic accreditation of international programs awarding joint or multiple degrees, including those within University Alliances, [...] may adopt, for the performance of its responsibilities, the models developed and shared at the European level, which provide 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, as well as to PhDs where the use of the EA is requested by the coordinating institution.

Referring to the accreditation of international joint programmes and joint PhDs, ANVUR can:

- a) recognizing 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 the EQAR;
- b) coordinating evaluation procedures for joint programmes conducted using the EA, regardless of whether one or more Italian institutions participate⁸.

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 sections.

2. Joint programmes

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 EHEA⁹ countries, leading to the awarding of either double/multiple degrees or a single joint degree. The main objectives of joint programmes are to enhance 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

⁷ Ministerial 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>

⁸ Si veda a tale proposito la nota 6.

⁹ "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

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 within European Alliances under the *European University Initiative*¹⁰.

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.

2.1 Accreditation using the EA of joint programmes EQF level 6 and 7 in the national context

In accordance with Legislative Decree No. 19/2012¹¹ 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.

Accreditation of a joint programme using the EA within the Italian context, in the case ANVUR coordinates the procedure or not, can apply to:

- a) a programme already accredited at the national level, of which the entirety or a portion (e.g., a curriculum) is used as part of a proposed joint program. If the program has not yet been accredited but is also intended to be offered as a national program, it must first undergo the standard accreditation procedure, in accordance with the annual deadlines;
- 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.

¹⁰ <https://education.ec.europa.eu/education-levels/higher-education/european-universities-initiative>

¹¹ 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>

In the case of subsection (a)

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 the 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 the CUN, which is the last to decide on the equivalence of the teaching system for a national class/ interclass degree.

In the case of subsection (b)

The Italian institutions proposing the programme, after obtaining the positive opinion of the Evaluation Unit, must first inform the CUN and the ANVUR, which express their views on the areas of competence. In particular, the 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 class/ interclass degree. ANVUR verifies the possession of adequate teaching requirements for joint programmes¹², 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. These verifications take place both in the case where ANVUR coordinates the evaluation procedure and when the task is assigned to another agency listed in EQAR, as soon as the Italian institution formally decides to participate in the joint program, and in any case before the evaluation procedure is initiated.

Whether the evaluation procedure is coordinated by ANVUR or by a foreign QA agency, the following procedure is adopted:

1. The Italian university (or universities), before the start of the evaluation carried out through the EA, must notify the MUR, the CUN and ANVUR of the programme to be activated, each of which will provide input within their respective areas of competence. To this end, the university (or universities) must upload the required information on the joint programme into a dedicated section of the MUR SUA-CDS database, which will remain open regardless of the annual window set for the ordinary accreditation of study programmes.
2. The ANVUR and the CUN, after receiving the request of the University and verifying the availability of documentation on the platform. The procedure is "put on hold" until the necessary verifications have been completed.
3. If ANVUR is coordinating the evaluation procedure, it will inform the other relevant foreign QA agencies about the ongoing verifications and the expected timeline for their completion. Otherwise, ANVUR will communicate this information only to the foreign QA agency responsible for the EA procedure, if it has already been designated by the consortium of institutions presenting the joint programme.
4. The ANVUR and the CUN 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 SUA-CDS platform.
5. If the verifications 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

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 Nel caso di un corso di studio già accreditato a livello nazionale che l'Istituzione italiana coinvolta intende trasformare in corso esclusivamente congiunto, si deve procedere alla disattivazione del corso nazionale.

opinion, the results are communicated only to the university that has proposed participation in the joint course, which will not be able to take part in the consortium.

6. If the verifications are positive, communicate this the involved AQ agencies or to the AQ Agency coordinating the procedure assess with the coordinating agency whether or not to identify Italian experts.
7. 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.
8. At the end of the procedure, the evaluation report is drafted. ANVUR receives the evaluation report from the agency responsible for the procedure coordination or ANVUR transmits it in case it has the role of the coordinating agency.
9. ANVUR validates the evaluation procedure 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.

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. - 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. 	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). 	Additional faculty contributions must be proportional to the number of foreign faculty and the Italian institution's teaching commitments in terms of programmed

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.

	- For joint programmes with one or more Italian institutions: at least 1 permanent full or associate professor and 1 researcher employed at each university.	teaching.
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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.

2.2 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.

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

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: 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: 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 programmes 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
Objective III – Student-centred learning Includes: 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

ANVUR REQUIREMENTS FOR INITIAL ACCREDITATION	STANDARD FOR THE EUROPEAN APPROACH	ESG PART 1	ESG PART 2
Objective IV – Allocation of teaching and administrative staff, and structures suitable for teaching needs Includes: 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
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

3. Joint PhD programmes

JDPs involve the design and coordination of the doctoral course, as well as the training of students, jointly by members of the consortium of universities from different countries¹⁶. The definitions of joint doctorate and double/multiple doctorate are clarified below.

Joint PhD programme (JDP): A joint doctorate is a doctoral programme designed by two or more academic institutions. The doctoral candidate prepares a single PhD thesis which can be discussed at one of the universities in the consortium.

Title/Joint PhD degree: The participating institutions, in accordance with national legislation, will award a joint diploma signed and stamped by the various institutions involved in the doctorate.

Double/multiple PhD programmes: separate degrees awarded by higher education institutions offering the joint doctorate. In a dual doctorate, each participating institution shall award the diploma independently, subject to the fulfilment of the requirements laid down in the cooperation agreement.

3.1 Accreditation of joint doctoral programmes (JDP) in the national context using the EA

The modalities and criteria for accrediting doctoral programmes are now defined by MUR [DM n. 226/2021](#) "Regulation on the accreditation of doctoral posts and courses and criteria for the establishment of doctoral courses by accredited institutions"¹⁷ followed, based on the guidelines proposed by ANVUR, by the [DM n. 301/2022](#) which approved the content and indicated its application in the accreditation of new doctoral programmes¹⁸.

As with first- and second-cycle degree programs, the accreditation of a joint doctoral program through the European Approach (EA) within the Italian context requires ANVUR to verify, for the Italian partners, compliance with certain requirements prior to the start of the joint doctoral

¹⁶ See, for example, the doctoral networks under the Doctoral Networks – Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions, which offer the possibility to propose joint doctorates resulting from international, intersectoral, and interdisciplinary integration and collaboration among higher education institutions.

<https://marie-sklodowska-curie-actions.ec.europa.eu/actions/doctoral-networks>

¹⁷ See art. 1 point 3 lett. d).

¹⁸ Guidelines for the accreditation of doctoral programs pursuant to Article 4, paragraph 3, of the regulation set out in Ministerial Decree of 14 December 2021, No. 226 <https://www.mur.gov.it/sites/default/files/2022-05/Decreto%20Ministeriale%20n.%20301%20del%2022-03-2022.pdf> The guidelines state in Section 2 that: "In the case of doctoral programs that have received accreditation at the European/international level (joint PhD programmes), ANVUR will issue a positive opinion for the accreditation of such programs, together with the recognition/funding decision at the European level and the submission of the related documentation, which may also be used for evaluation purposes in the context of periodic accreditation."

program's accreditation procedure.

3.2 Evaluation of joint PhDs using the EA and the role of ANVUR

If a consortium of higher education institutions including one or more Italian universities decides to entrust ANVUR or an other foreign agency registered in EQAR with the task of evaluating a joint doctorate through the EA, pending further developments in the accreditation procedures at European level, the following procedure shall be adopted:

1. The Italian University (or Universities), before the start of the evaluation carried out using the EA, inform the MUR and ANVUR, which express their views on the areas of competence, and send the following relevant documentation:
 - a. consortium agreement
 - b. teaching project
 - c. PhD board members
2. ANVUR verifies:
 - a. **the quality of the training project as a whole** (with the support, when needed of external experts);
 - b. **the scientific and/or professional qualification of the PhD board members** (Italian members only).
3. If the verifications of the preliminary requirements is negative, the institutions may submit any counterclaims within 10 days to ANVUR, 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 PhD programme, which will not be able to take part in the consortium.
4. If the verifications are positive, ANVUR, if it is not the coordinating institution, assess with the coordinating agency whether or not 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, the evaluation report is drafted. ANVUR receives the evaluation report from the agency responsible for the procedure coordination and validates the results. If ANVUR is coordinating the procedure it transmits it to other national QA agencies so that they can validate the results according to the national legislative frameworks. In both cases ANVUR validates the evaluation procedure 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 five years after accreditation, in agreement with the Agency responsible for it.

APPENDIX A – EA ACCREDITATION STANDARDS

STANDARD 1.ELIGIBILITY

1.1 Status

The institutions that offer a joint programme should⁵ 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-EEES)
- ✓ 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 – EUROPEAN APPROACH: ACCREDITATION PROCEDURE

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]