

Institutional FAQs: European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes

GENERAL FRAMEWORK

1. What is the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes?

The European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes (European Approach or EA) is a European approach to quality assurance for joint programmes. It enables higher education institutions to use a single integrated evaluation procedure based on shared European standards, reducing duplication and overlap arising from the application of multiple national procedures.

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2. Which programmes does the European Approach apply to?

Nel quadro delle Linee Guida ANVUR, lo European Approach si applica all'accREDITamento iniziale dei corsi di studio congiunti di primo ciclo e di secondo ciclo istituiti a partire dall'a.a. 2025/2026, nonché ai dottorati di ricerca congiunti, secondo le condizioni previste dalle Linee Guida.

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3. Can the European Approach be used for a joint programme offered exclusively by Italian institutions??

No. Under the EA, a joint programme is an integrated curriculum coordinated and offered jointly by institutions from two or more different countries within the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). The European Approach therefore does not apply to quality assurance for programmes jointly offered by different institutions within a single country.

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4. Which agencies can carry out an evaluation under the European Approach??

The evaluation must be entrusted to a quality assurance agency registered in EQAR, subject to the conditions applicable to the national systems involved.

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5. What does “consortium” mean in the context of the European Approach?

For the purposes of the European Approach, the term “consortium” refers to the group of higher education institutions that formally collaborate in designing and delivering the joint programme. It does not necessarily entail establishing a consortium as a separate legal entity under Italian law.

Collaboration between the participating institutions is governed by a specific agreement (consortium agreement or cooperation agreement), which sets out, among other things, programme governance, the partners' roles and responsibilities, degree-awarding arrangements, student mobility and the main operational arrangements..

RUOLO DI ANVUR E DELLE ALTRE AGENZIE

6. Can ANVUR coordinate procedures under the European Approach?

Yes. As an EQAR-registered agency, ANVUR can coordinate evaluation and accreditation procedures for joint programmes under the European Approach at the consortium's request, including where the consortium does not include any Italian institutions.

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7. Is it possible to choose an EQAR-registered agency other than ANVUR?

Yes. Another agency registered in EQAR may be selected for a joint programme involving one or more Italian institutions. The preliminary checks required under the ANVUR Guidelines for the participation of Italian institutions must still be carried out by ANVUR.

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8. Can an evaluation carried out by another EQAR-registered agency be recognised in Italy?

Yes. ANVUR may recognise and validate the outcomes of an evaluation carried out by another agency registered in EQAR, subject to verification of compliance with the national requirements applicable to the joint programme.

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9. Does verification of the national requirements constitute an additional accreditation procedure?

No. This verification is not a second accreditation procedure running in parallel with the evaluation carried out under the European Approach. Its purpose is to establish compliance with the national requirements applicable to the participation of Italian institutions in the joint programme.

The checks vary depending on the circumstances. For programmes already accredited at national level, CUN issues an opinion on the equivalence of the programme structure to a national degree class/interclass. For newly established joint programmes, once a favourable opinion has been obtained from the Evaluation Board, CUN checks the coherence of the course units contributed by the Italian institutions to the joint programme and the equivalence of the overall programme structure to a national degree class/interclass; ANVUR also verifies compliance with the specific teaching staff requirements for joint programmes. In the latter case, the opinion of the Regional Coordination Committee (CoReCo) is not required.

The checks are carried out before the evaluation procedure under the European Approach begins, whether the procedure is coordinated by ANVUR or entrusted to another agency registered in EQAR.

APPLICABILITY IN THE ITALIAN SYSTEM

10. In which cases can the European Approach apply in the Italian context?

The ANVUR Guidelines distinguish, in particular, between:

- programmes already accredited at national level, where the entire programme or part of it contributes to a joint programme;
- newly established joint programmes, set up in accordance with the conditions laid down in the Guidelines.

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11. Must a programme that is not yet accredited at national level first obtain national accreditation in order to participate in a joint programme evaluated under the European Approach?

It depends on the circumstances. Where a programme is also intended to be established and offered as a national programme, national accreditation must be completed before the procedure under the European Approach begins. Once accredited, the entire programme or part of it, such as a curriculum, may contribute to a joint programme.

For a newly established joint programme that is not intended to be established beforehand as a national programme, the specific procedure laid down in the ANVUR Guidelines for this case may be applied.

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12. If a Study programme already accredited at national level becomes an exclusively joint programme, must it be discontinued as a national programme?

Yes. If a programme already accredited at national level is converted into an exclusively joint programme, the ANVUR Guidelines provide for the discontinuation of the national programme (cfr. note 13 of the ANVUR European Approach Guidelines).

The situation is different where the national programme continues to be delivered and the entire programme or part of it, such as a curriculum, contributes to a joint programme: in this case, the national programme remains active and the provisions of the Guidelines for programmes already accredited at national level apply.

STARTING THE PROCEDURE AND TIMELINES

13. How is a procedure under the European Approach coordinated by ANVUR initiated?

The consortium's coordinating institution may contact ANVUR to express its interest in entrusting the Agency with coordination of the procedure. ANVUR will provide the necessary details on the operational arrangements and applicable documentation.

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14. When can information be entered in the dedicated section of the SUA-CdS database?

The dedicated section of the MUR SUA-CdS database is always open, independently of the annual window for standard accreditation. Information on the joint programme may therefore be entered throughout the year in accordance with the prescribed procedure.

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15. What is the deadline for ANVUR and CUN to issue their opinions on the preliminary checks?

ANVUR and CUN issue their opinions, within their respective areas of responsibility, no later than 30 days after the request. The outcome is made available to the university on the SUA-CdS platform.

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16. For the preliminary national checks, is any further communication with ANVUR or CUN required in addition to completing the dedicated section of the SUA-CdS database?

No. The information and documentation are submitted through the dedicated section of the SUA-CdS database, unless otherwise indicated. Where the consortium also intends to entrust ANVUR with coordination of the evaluation procedure under the European Approach, this is a separate step: the coordinating institution must contact ANVUR, which will provide the necessary guidance on initiating the procedure.

DOCUMENTS, TEMPLATES AND SUPPORT

17. Where can the ANVUR Guidelines and materials on the European Approach be found?

The Guidelines and public documentation relating to the European Approach are available on ANVUR's institutional website in the following section:

<https://www.anvur.it/en/internationalisation/cross-border-qa/european-approach>

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18. Which ANVUR documents are useful to consult before starting an EA procedure?

In addition to the ANVUR Guidelines on the European Approach, the dedicated page provides the main operational tools applicable to the procedure, including:

- Procedure for the Evaluation of Joint Programmes under the European Approach;
- Evaluation Model/Template;
- SER Template.

Reference should always be made to the versions published on the ANVUR website.

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19. Who can be contacted for clarification on the European Approach?

For information and clarification, ANVUR may be contacted through its institutional channels. For international activities relating to the European Approach, the following email address is available: internazionale@anvur.it

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20. Must the consortium agreement already be signed when it is uploaded to the SUA-CdS platform?

Yes. The agreement to be attached must be final and signed by the partners. Uploading an unsigned version does not meet the documentation requirement for submitting the proposal.

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21. Which documents must be uploaded to the SUA-CdS database?

The main documents include:

- the programme proposal;
- the final, signed consortium agreement;
- the documentation required by the Guidelines.

The Self-Evaluation Report (SER) is submitted to the agency responsible for the evaluation and is not the same document as the one to be uploaded in the "Programme Project" field.

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22. Must the Self-Evaluation Report be uploaded in the "Programme Project [PDF]" field?

No. A general description of the programme proposal must be uploaded in the "Programme Project [PDF]" field, including for the purposes of the checks falling within CUN's remit.

The Self-Evaluation Report is a separate document and must be submitted to the agency coordinating the evaluation under the European Approach.

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23. Which language must be used for the Self-Evaluation Report?

The Self-Evaluation Report must be written in English. Where ANVUR coordinates the procedure, the template published by the Agency must be used.

NATIONAL REQUIREMENTS AND SUA-CDS

24. If a programme is already accredited and offered at national level, is a new opinion from the Evaluation Board required for the procedure under the European Approach?

No. For programmes already accredited at national level, the ANVUR Guidelines do not require a new opinion from the Evaluation Board to initiate the procedure under the European Approach. The programme has already completed the standard national accreditation procedure.

A prior favourable opinion from the Evaluation Board is, however, expressly required by the Guidelines for newly established joint programmes.

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25. Which body does the “Evaluation Board opinion [PDF]” field refer to?

Il campo si riferisce al Nucleo di Valutazione di ciascuna università italiana che partecipa al consorzio, secondo la fattispecie applicabile.

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26. What teaching staff requirements apply, and which teaching staff members must be listed in SUA-CdS?

Joint programmes must meet the teaching staff requirements specified in Table 3 of the ANVUR Guidelines on the European Approach, which take into account the applicable national legislation (at present, in particular, DM 1154/2021 and DD 2711/2021).

The teaching staff members who contribute to meeting these requirements must be listed in the relevant SUA-CdS fields.

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EVALUATION AND SITE VISIT

27. Does the site visit under the EA model take place at all partner universities?

Not necessarily. The arrangements for the site visit depend on the characteristics of the joint programme and the procedure adopted by the agency responsible for the evaluation.

For procedures coordinated by ANVUR, the arrangements are defined in accordance with the procedure published by the Agency and communicated to the consortium.

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28. Are there costs for procedures coordinated by ANVUR?

es. As the cost may depend on the characteristics of the procedure, the consortium is invited to contact ANVUR for information applicable to its specific case. The indicative cost of the evaluation procedure ranges from €12,000 to €15,000. Logistics costs (organisation of the site visit, meals and accommodation) are added to this amount.

Where the evaluation is coordinated by another EQAR-registered agency, the conditions set by the appointed agency apply.

DEGREES AND CURRICULA

29. Can a joint programme award a joint degree?

Yes. A joint programme may lead to the award of a single joint degree or, depending on the arrangements adopted and the applicable regulatory frameworks, double or multiple degrees

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30. How can participation in an EMJM curriculum or another international curriculum be made visible?

The degree must comply with the applicable national rules governing the names of the programme and the degree.

Additional information on the student's study pathway, including any participation in a specific international curriculum, may be recorded in the Diploma Supplement in accordance with the applicable rules.