

Joint Programmes

"Joint Programme" is understood, in its broadest sense, to mean the joint development and/or implementation of programmes by two or more domestic or foreign educational institutions. Merging existing modules from individual study programmes can form cooperation modules, or independent of existing study programmes, partner institutions can design completely new study programmes. If these study programmes lead to one of the participating institutions issuing a jointly awarded degree, it is usually called a "Joint Degree Programme," while a "Double Degree Programme" typically issues separate degrees, which are awarded by the designated institutions themselves. There are, however, no officially valid definitions and no uniform use of these terms at the European level¹.

For the participation of private universities in joint programmes the following principles, which have been developed at the European level, are to be observed²:

Accreditation / National Recognition

- Partner institutions must be recognized post-secondary educational institutions.
- Joint programmes require accreditation by the ÖAR, as they are (at least in their combination) new study programmes. The recognition of a joint programme by a foreign accreditation body does not supersede accreditation by the ÖAR.
- In the case that the national legislation of the country of the partner institution has a mandatory provision regarding programme accreditation, this either needs to be proved or carried out by means of a parallel or joint accreditation procedure. For the purposes of process efficiency, a common

¹ The term "double-degree programmes" within the meaning of § 51 para 2 Z 27 UG 2002 is tighter and therefore constitutes a particular form of a joint programme. The University Act of 2002 only refers to proper studies, that are carried out across national borders by virtue of agreement between one or more Austrian university and one or more recognized post-secondary foreign educational institution. This rule does not apply to private universities.

² In this context, the following publications at the European level include: Christian Tauch and Andrejs Rauhvargers's "Survey on Master Degrees and Joint Degrees in Europe" (2002); The Committee of the Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region's "The Recommendation on the Recognition of Joint Degrees" and the "Explanatory memorandum to the recommendation on the recognition of joint degrees" (2004); European University Association's "Developing Joint Masters Programmes for Europe. Results of the EUA Joint Masters Project (March 2002 - Jan 2004)" (2004) and "Guidelines for Quality Enhancement in European Joint Master's Programmes" (2006).

procedure should be aimed at by the relevant accreditation bodies, which should be based on the ECA Principles for the accreditation of joint programmes.³

Cooperation Agreement

In a cooperation agreement all participating institutions must regulate, at least the following points in advance:

- Academic achievements that the students at the respective institutions have to provide. In accordance with international guidelines, the contribution of the participating institutions in regard to the length of study should be comparable.⁴
- Admission and selection procedures.
- Setting the applicable studies and exam regulations.
- The automatic and full recognition of examinations and the scientific work which will be required of students at participating institutions.
- Academic Degree:
According to the basic principle, that for one academic achievement only one degree is to be allocated, the following possibilities regarding the awarding of joint degrees can be raised:
 - (a) One institution awards the academic degree, while the partner institution awards a certificate of approval, which is determined to be equivalent to an academic degree awarded by that institution.
 - (b) The institutions award academic degrees by way of a joint document.

³ European Consortium for Accreditation: *“Principles for accreditation procedures regarding joint programmes”* (2007).

⁴ The University Act 2002 requires that each participating partner institution, in regard to the awarding of double diplomas, be responsible for providing a minimum share of the study course. For a study course with the size of 120 ECTS at least 30 ECTS are required, for more than 120 ECTS a minimum of 60 ECTS are required. (§ 87 Paragraph 5 UG 2002). This requirement can also be used as a benchmark for joint programmes of private universities.