

QUALITY PROCESS



a. Institutional systems

a.1. The four universities and EMBS – A special challenge for quality assurance

Similar to most other accreditation issues, the EMBS quality assurance processes also need to cope with the challenge to reconcile the establishment of a joint degree programme with institutional regulations and procedures as well as legal country frameworks.

The situation can be described as follows:

- Quality assurance and quality management systems differ at the four universities.
- Within the four universities, different procedures have been implemented which are partly binding for all departments/programmes, *e.g.* course evaluations.
- Some EMBS specificity is not covered by the university procedures, *e.g.* programme coherence over countries.
- Since EMBS is an integral part of the four universities it cannot act outside the established institutional systems.
- EMBS, at present a small programme within a broad range of offers for each university, is restricted in its capability to develop new and far-reaching procedural systems requiring bigger investments.
- Quality assurance differences such as specific course evaluation procedures also reflect cultural particularities of the countries, which is a valuable student experience.

Thus potentially feasible solutions between the given university and country restrictions and the requirements of an innovative joint-degree programme were discussed within the management committee and re-discussed in preparation for the EPAS accreditation.

As a result, it was decided to adopt the following arrangement:

- Those country-specific procedures, which are indispensable for a partner, are to be retained and used as an information source in the EMBS context. This is especially the case for course evaluations being part of a university-wide system.
 - It is to be avoided to double such country-specific procedures, *e.g.* through additional course evaluations in a uniform EMBS way in the four countries, as long as they help to ensure quality within the countries.
 - On the other hand, it is necessary to introduce additional quality control for EMBS specific issues of major importance, especially if an overall comparison of the four semesters is crucial, *e.g.* with regard to their coherence.
- Several aspects are not (yet) considered in all or some of the four partner institutions in the context of quality assurance and here as well, EMBS-specific quality procedures are to be installed. This example holds true for the quality of student intake or the quality of the administrative staff.

a.2. The four universities' quality assurance systems – major characteristics

University Savoie Mont Blanc

Organisational structure

On the University level, USMB is particularly involved in two quality areas:

- With regard to recruitment, professional training, equality issues, University Savoie Mont Blanc follows the quality complaints under the responsibility of a Vice-Rector in charge of studies and student life at the University Savoie Mont Blanc.
- As far as security and IT-control is concerned, the USMB follows the quality criticism under the responsibility of the IT Manager at USMB. A yearly IT security report is established and presented under the supervision of the USMB Information System Governance Committee (COSSI in French).

On the IAE level, IAE Savoie Mont Blanc has the following quality responsibilities:

- At the IAE Savoie Mont Blanc level, an advisor is in charge of quality system improvement (staffed part time by Jean-Robert Comperat - Associate Lecturer), supported by an internal quality auditor and by two teams of Master's students working each year on quality improvement projects (Master's MDI with speciality in quality and performance improvement).
- An external professional expert in enterprise management is in charge of animating and leading the programme improvement committee that focuses on IAE programme adequacy with market trends and quality of student recruitment.

4

Scope of activities and routines

Degree programmes are subject to a periodical process of revision, within two time frames:

- External evaluation I: Every five years, each programme is evaluated by the national accreditation agency, HCERES (Evaluation Council for Research and Higher Education), including a fully developed self-report and an on-site visit of the accreditation agency's experts.
- External evaluation II: a yearly external audit is achieved by SGS to certify IAE Savoie Mont Blanc according to Qualicert standards (mandatory to be in the IAE Network)¹.
- Internal evaluation and improvement projects: a yearly internal audit according to Qualicert is achieved and quality improvement plans are controlled.
- A yearly internal improvement ad-hoc committee –involving the programme manager, programme lecturers, the IAE “Club des Entreprises” and external professionals and experts– comes together to deal with (1) curriculum adequacy with market trends and needs, (2) students recruitment quality and (3) programme perspectives.
- Recruitment of professors and lecturers: standardised routine checks of formal qualifications as well the presentation performance of the candidates in the campus.

¹ <http://www.sgsgroup.fr/-/media/Local/France/Documents/Case%20Studies/SGSSCCCase%20Study%20Reseau%20IAELRFR1204v6web.pdf>.

- Coordination of teaching activities, assessment methods, student tutoring is done by the local programme manager (consistently with EMBS objectives and USMB regulations).
- Assessment of studies and student life is performed once a year for improvement ideas at the level of the University and monitored locally by the IAE Board of Directors.
- Assessment of occupational integration is performed once a year after 6 and 30 months at the level of the University and also monitored locally by the IAE Board of Directors.

University of Trento

Organisational structure

At the University level

- The quality management process is assisted by the “Presidio per la qualità” (Quality Assurance Committee², and is assessed by the Nucleo di Valutazione (Evaluation committee³). The Quality Assurance Committee assists the UniTrento Academic Senate in defining University quality strategies; defines guidelines and standards for quality assurance for teaching research; supports the design process of Degree courses by Departments; organises training activities on quality assurance and supervises the quality management of Departments and Degree programmes.
- The Nucleo di Valutazione is made up of five expert evaluators (four of them external to the University of Trento). It verifies and assesses quality activities of University, Departments and Degree programmes, and reports to the Academic Senate and to the ANVUR, the National Agency for Evaluation of Universities and Research Institutes, quality management, teaching coordination and evaluation (www.anvur.org/).

At the Department and Degree programme levels

- The quality management of each department is coordinated by a Delegate of the Director of the Department. The department names a committee (Commissione Paritetica Docenti Studenti) equally made up of students and professors, that performs a yearly overview of teaching outcomes, student careers during the degree programme and after, student surveys on satisfaction.
- Finally, the degree programme names a Revision Committee that produces a yearly report on teaching quality and outcomes, with suggestions on quality improvements; a three year report aimed at verifying the persistency and lasting validity of learning goals of the degree programme.
- Quality assurance activities are controlled by the National Evaluation Agency (ANVUR). At the moment of the approval, the design of the degree programme is submitted to the ANVUR for approval. Subsequently, periodic reviews are carried out both remotely and by means of an on-site visit by a team of evaluation experts (CEV) of the National Agency for Evaluation of Universities and Research Institutes. CEVs are made up of the President (with proven experience in evaluation), discipline experts, and students.

² <http://www.unitn.it/en/ateneo/1800/quality-assurance-committee>)

³ <http://www.unitn.it/en/ateneo/1794/evaluation-group>

Scope of activities and routines

Degree programmes are subject to a periodical process of revision, within two time frames:

- First, a yearly revision process is carried out by a “re-examination committee” made up of faculty members and students. Under this time frame, a process of continuous improvement is carried out. The whole learning process is considered in the light of statistical evidence under three chapters: **1.** Student hiring, advancement and exit; **2.** Students learning experience; **3.** Job placement. The analysis makes use of statistical data provided by the Policy and Statistics Support Unit of the University, and of surveys on the quality of teaching and services. All courses are subject to student evaluation, the results of which are carefully considered during the yearly revision process. For each chapter, actions for quality improvement are suggested. Actions put in place in the previous years are checked. The revision process is finally examined and controlled by a departmental Joint Students-Teachers Committee equally comprised of students and faculty members.
- Second, a three year revision process: the Faculty names a committee with the duty to check the lasting validity of learning goals, through an analysis of placement; an interaction with labour representatives; an analysis of labour market data and surveys. Moreover, a periodical check of the coherence of learning activities and outcomes with learning activities, and with the overall learning goals of the degree programme is carried out by the same committee. Actions for improvement are suggested. The whole process is assisted by the Quality Assurance Committee and is evaluated by the Nucleo di Valutazione (Evaluation Committee).
- Faculty hiring within departments is evaluated by an Academic Appointment Committee; it overviews the process of professor appointments, assesses the qualification and proposes to the Academic Senate the selection committees named for each position, and verifies the correctness and quality orientation of the whole process. Assessment of lecture quality is done yearly using a standardised assessment tool including the feedback routine to lecturers and programme manager.

University of Kassel

Organisational structure

Quality assurance of the School of Economics and Business at the University of Kassel is divided in two organisational areas:

- Process quality management, teaching coordination and evaluations: In this unit one full-time position covers coordination, process quality and complaint management; a part-time position covers teaching evaluations & formal support of curricular development; a part-time position for student career development, internships, placements. The unit is controlled by and reports to the vice dean responsible for teaching (Studiendekan).
- Recruitment, professional training, equality issues and security/IT-control: This unit is staffed with two full-time positions und supported by 6 equal-opportunity commissioners covering the various academic and administrative levels. This unit is controlled by and reports to the dean of the faculty.

Scope of activities and routines:

- Guaranteeing course availability and course quality: Formal check by specialised routing in the university information system HIS (including the mapping to the module handbooks of the programmes), evaluation of the availability of teaching materials in the Moodle system, bi-annual request of reports from the coordinators of all programmes. Additionally, the sufficient availability of lectures in English language is controlled.
- Coordination of lectures, supervising student coaching activities: bi-annual programme coordinator meetings (Kommission Studium & Lehre), centralised coaching activities in the “Service Center Studium” (SCS), training of tutors.
- Assessment of course quality: all courses undergo evaluation every 3 semesters using a standardised assessment tool including a feedback routine to lecturers, professors and programme coordinators. Also preparation of aggregated primary data for rankings and external evaluations.
- Collection of ideas and suggestions, complaint management: IT-based system facilities ensure both personalised and anonymous handling of issues. Immediate discussion and decision on responses and relevant measures in the responsible boards headed by the vice dean for teaching of the faculty are initiated.
- • Recruitment of professors and lecturers: Standardised routines are in place both for job posting/candidate invitations and for checking formal qualifications as well as candidate presentation performance. Students and equal opportunity commissioners always participate in the selection committees. If any of the candidates have a disability, the disability officer has to be part of the committee as well.
- Professional training and feedback: Fully developed didactical programme (LLUCAS) complemented by individual coaching by our SCS. Every 5 years professors send a self-report to the university president and formalised personal feedback is mandatory.
- External evaluation I: Every 5 years, each programme is evaluated by the national accreditation agency (ZEvA for the EMBS), including a fully developed self-report and an on-site visit of the accreditation agency’s experts.
- External evaluation II: Self-report based evaluations by the ministry of education of Hesse (see “Fächerranking 2015” in the base room), including a qualitative and quantitative benchmarking against other business faculties of Hessian universities.

University of León

Organisational structure

- The Office for Evaluation and Quality (OEC) is the university organisational unit with competence in matters of evaluation and quality. The institutional quality policy and the underlying objectives refer to all the educational activities of the University of León. It organises and develops the quality objectives and policy of the University of León in coordination with all the Vice-rectors of the University.
- On 18 September 2008, the creation of the Quality Commission of León University (CC_ULE) was approved by the Governing Board as the highest decision-making body of the León University Quality Assurance System (SGC_ULE).

Scope of activities and routines:

The OEC’s mission is to provide support to the development of the ULE quality policy focusing on the commitment to a culture of quality, developing their own strategies

for continuous improvement, coordinating the procedures of the ULE Quality Assurance System (SGC) and making information mechanisms available to the institution in order to make decisions.

The activities are organized following these guidelines:

LINE 1 Planning

Objective: to create, coordinate and support planning mechanisms in a stable manner in all the institution's spheres of action.

LINE 2 Evaluation

Objective: to create, coordinate and support evaluation mechanisms in all the institution's spheres of action, whatever their purpose (accreditation or improvement).

LINE 3 Institutional studies

Objective: to coordinate and exploit the University's information system, focusing on support when making decisions and informing the university community, public administration and society about University activities.

LINE 4 Improvements

Objective: to develop improvement programmes of strategic interest.

Within this context, the unit responsible for education assumes as its own the internal policy and procedures related to university quality assurance, which reflect its commitment with quality culture using on-going improvement strategies and procedures to serve the institution and involve all individuals concerned.

8

This policy and its objectives are part of the quality policy carried out by León University and therefore meet the criteria and objectives established for this purpose.

a.3. The four EMBS-specific institutionalised quality assurance fields

EMBS management identified four quality assurance areas, being crucial for EMBS programme design and requiring EMBS-specific quality assurance approaches: quality of student intake, quality of academic EMBS staff, quality of EMBS administration and quality of the programme itself.

Quality of students

Specific EMBS procedures are necessary as the universities in general only apply quite general procedures for recruiting Master's students. Often, the final mark of prior bachelor studies is the only basis for selection. EMBS students face special challenges in connection with a study programme split over four countries and need advanced capabilities with regard to language, personal skills, and international mindedness. These pre-requisites are globally communicated to potential students and are tested on the basis of documents and an oral examination. This time-consuming individualised approach is only feasible because of the small size of the programme.

The process developed to ensure student quality may be illustrated as follows:

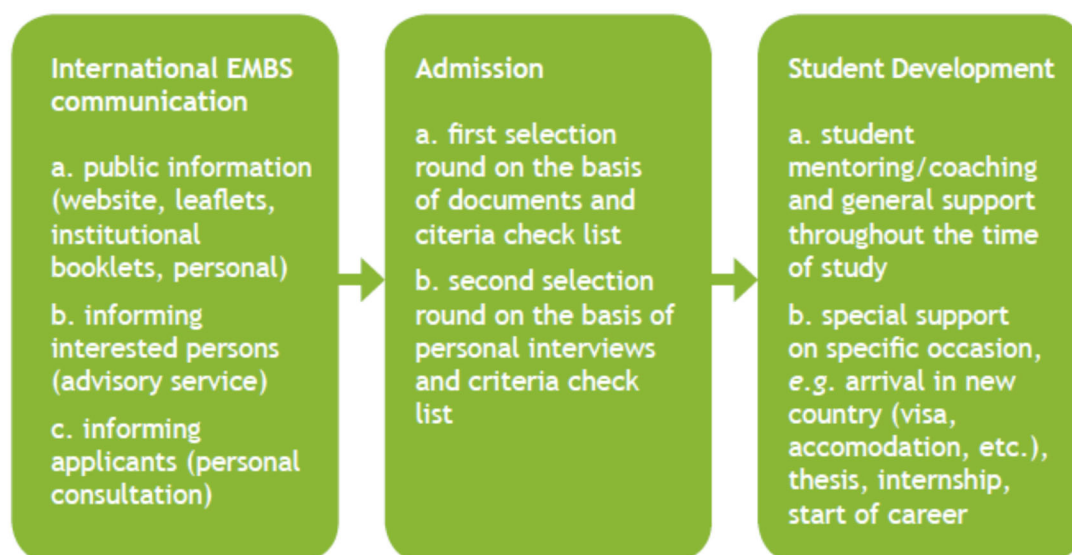


Figure 1. Student quality assurance

There are three phases of this quality assurance process. First, EMBS tries to communicate effectively with potential candidates. In an early stage, information material is distributed. The website and search engine results plus personal mouth-to-mouth communication play a major role; nevertheless EMBS is also using traditional media such as leaflets/brochures and presence in institutional booklets. The next step, personal advice via telephone, e-mail, Skype etc., is considered most important and has developed quite a lot over the years. This personal consultation is intensified when it comes to the application as applicants are guided through the process and get all the support they need or want.

Second, the two stages of the admission process ensure the recruitment of high-quality students especially apt to successfully complete the programme. The criteria checklist used for evaluating the documents and the oral examination have been developed over time and are especially designed with regard to the programme objectives.

Third, during their EMBS student life there, is a close relationship between staff and students leading to a highly individualised coaching process and support in problematic situations. Here again, a major advantage of a small programme becomes obvious.

All four institutions contribute to quality assurance as far as students are concerned. Due to a distribution of major tasks for efficiency reasons, Trento is responsible for coordinating communication and admission and guarantees the quality of these processes in close cooperation with Kassel, being responsible for overall quality assurance.

Quality of academic staff

Quality of permanent academic staff is basically ensured by the recruitment process of the universities. For visiting lecturers, however, at best some formal requirements have to be fulfilled. Therefore, EMBS has to carefully select such teachers with a view of the special challenges of the programme, especially with regard to language capabilities and international experience. After recruitment, the performance of teachers is both measured by the general university course evaluations but also on the basis of the EMBS semester reports and the final report.

The EMBS system of staff quality assurance on the basis of general university and specific EMBS procedures is illustrated as follows:

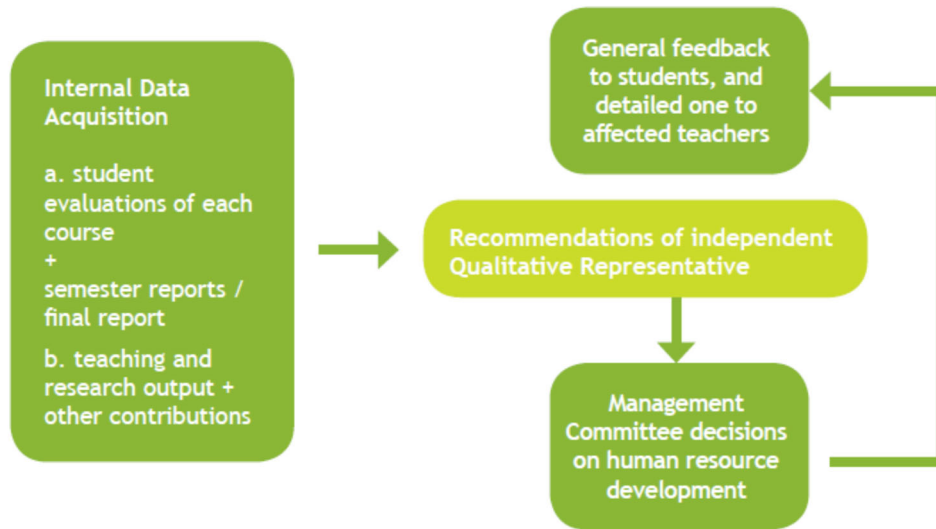


Figure 2. Academic staff quality assurance

On the basis of the aforementioned student evaluations and teaching/research output as well as other contributions (e.g. PR activities, support of administrative tasks etc.) the external Quality Representative assesses strengths and weaknesses and makes recommendations to the Management Committee he or she deems necessary for human resource development regarding academic staff. The latter makes the decisions and gives feedback to students and to teachers affected.

Quality of administration

In the EMBS context, the success of the programme is dependent on smooth cross-country administration. As students are facing a lot of challenges when moving from one country to another they need support in numerous ways, especially with regard to national specificity, be it accommodation, enrolment or visa matters. Thus staff involved in these tasks needs specific qualifications, which can only be assessed by EMBS-specific procedures.

The EMBS system of administration quality assurance is illustrated as follows:

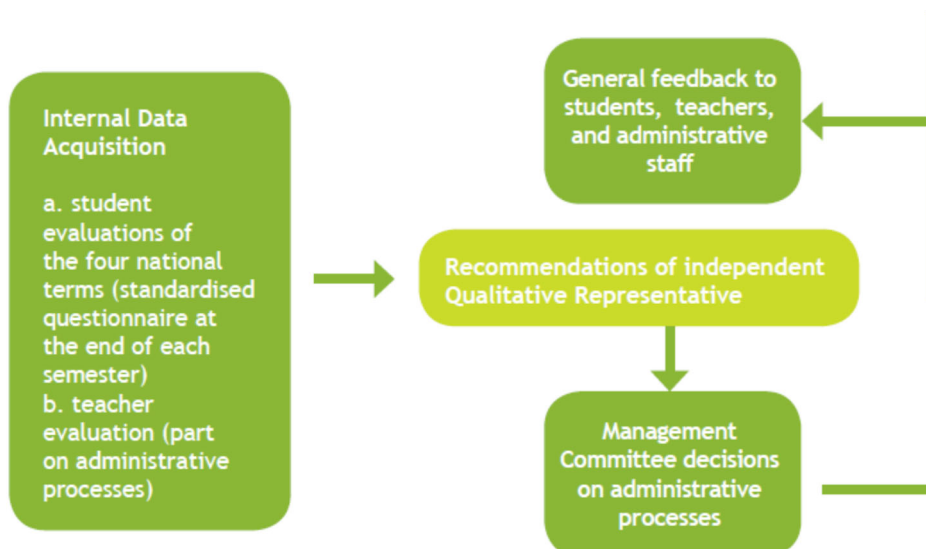


Figure 3. Administrative staff quality assurance

Sources of administration quality monitoring are the semester reports and the final report of the students/graduates as well as teacher evaluations with view to administrative support they needed and obtained. The Quality Representative again makes assessments and gives recommendations to the Management Committee. It decides on potential administration process modifications and also gives feedback to students/teachers/staff.

Quality of the programme

As far as the programme is concerned, EMBS profits from the general university student evaluations in the four countries. As far as country comparisons and overall programme evaluations are concerned, EMBS-specific procedures had to be developed. This is also the case, if evaluations beyond students (graduates/alumni, external experts) are to be considered. Universities also rely on different types of advisory boards, but the impact for specific programmes is negligible. External accreditations, which are partly mandatory for programmes are important and are a means of university-led quality control in relation to the specific programme. Thus the university systems can be used for programme quality assurance, but they need EMBS-specific amendments.

This EMBS system of programme quality assurance based on university and EMBS-specific sources may be illustrated as follows:

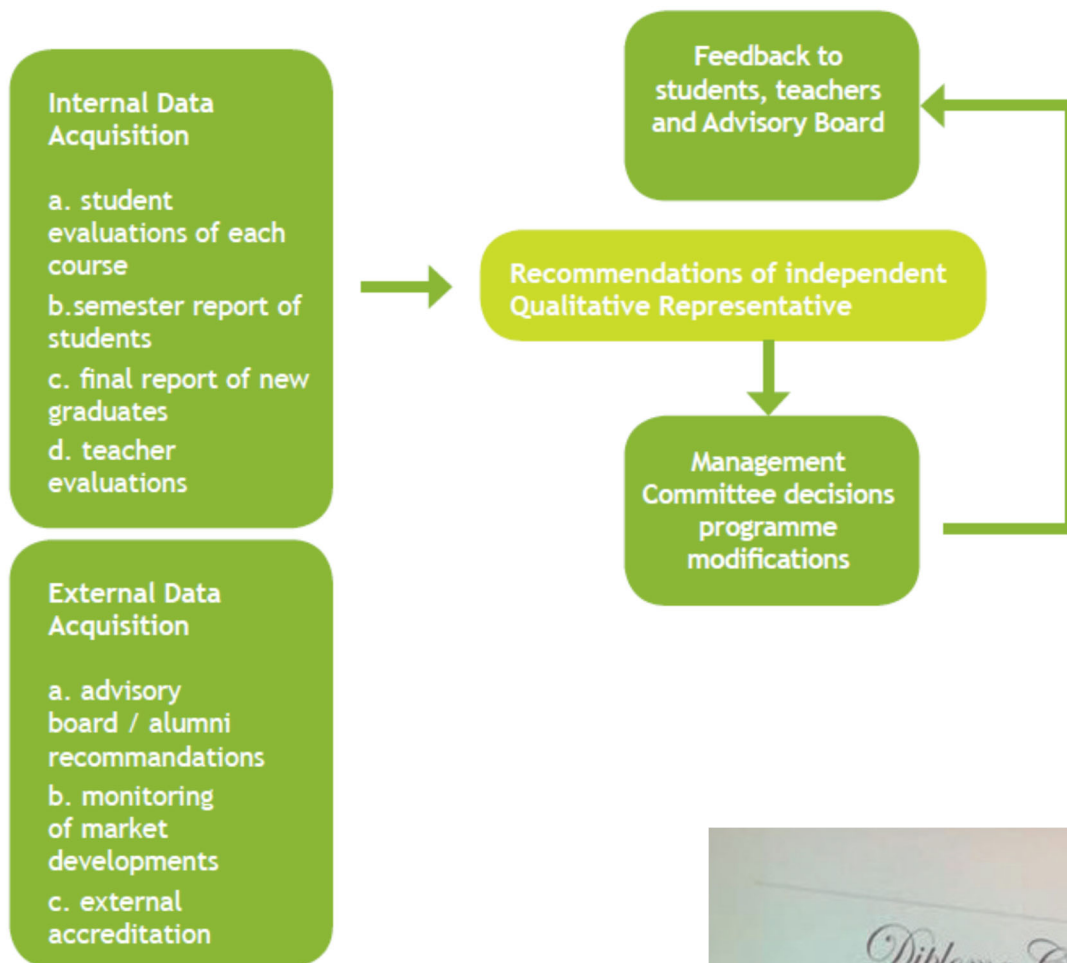


Figure 4. Programme quality assurance



Data for evaluating the programme are both collected from internal and external sources. The former are students enrolled in each semester, freshly graduated students, and teachers. Students participate in the university course evaluations and in two EMBS-specific evaluations that take place at the end of each semester and at the end of the whole programme, upon graduation. Student representatives are in charge of writing reports on the basis of some lead questions given to them. This approach should produce a more comprehensive picture of student experiences at different stages of their studies and enable the management team to make country comparisons and assess the coherence of the programme.

In order to get a clear and impartial picture, it seems important to also take into account the teacher's view and their experience with students and the programme.

In addition to the externally based and university-initiated accreditation given by national accreditation agencies, an advisory board was created and is made up of an academic and a business representative from each country plus two alumni. They organise regular meetings and share their views on the programme with EMBS management.

Alumni are represented in the advisory board; thus their view is considered as well. On top of this institutionalised formal assessment, there is an informal exchange of ideas between alumni and EMBS management as well as students on the occasion of the annual corporate seminar, which is used in parallel by the alumni to organise their annual conference.

EMBS also follows developments in the market of international Master's programmes in order to get new ideas, possibly even with regard to re-positioning the EMBS programme. The members of the Administrative Committee are responsible for bringing corresponding issues to the table.

The data from internal and external sources are submitted to an EMBS Qualitative Representative, who is to give an overall assessment and recommendations as to programme and further programme development. He or she is involved in academic affairs but not immediately in the EMBS programme. At present this position for programme, academic and administrative staff quality assurance is allocated to Mr Paolo Collini, Rector of the University of Trento.

Final decisions are then discussed and prepared by the Management Committee. Its members are also responsible for giving feedback to all groups that were involved in evaluations within each countries or cross-country.

Contributions to quality assurance through the mixed (university/ school + EMBS) institutionalised system

The mixed system of general university/faculty and specific EMBS quality assurance:

- supports an adequate implementation of the university strategy and of the EMBS programme strategy,
- guarantees adequate handling of the crucial quality fields of student recruitment and development, academic and administrative staff competencies, programme design adequacy,
- ensures the applicability of an institution-wide quality assurance system embedded in the institutions' government within each country, if relevant and applicable to the EMBS programme, meeting national stakeholder expectations and regulations (e.g. regarding external re-accreditation),

- ensures cross-country quality assurance of the core issues of a joint-degree programme over four institutions in four countries, taking into account programme specificity (e.g. regarding motivated staff, small programme size and personal atmosphere, internal programme reviews, and fast reaction),
- focuses on a compromise between formalised control processes and flexibility on demand.

b. Programme design/review and approval process

The aforementioned mixed institutional system especially supports the design and review of the programme. The fact that the decision making body, the management committee, is directly involved in all programme-related issues –from student recruitment to programme design– guarantees fast recognition of potential problems, immediate action, and insight into implementation. Personal involvement of all management committee members in teaching, their intensive cooperation with the entire faculty and the administrative committee –with student representatives on the one hand and immediate access to the management level of their universities on the other hand– ensure a smooth control and decision process, making programme changes and process improvements relatively easy.

As faculty size in each country is small, individual concerns and proposals can easily be discussed both informally and during formal meetings. Due to the agenda, regular management committee meetings are most often enlarged to additional faculty members and in general held together with the administrative committee or some of its members. This is both organised through personal attendance and video participation. The design of the programme is directly and indirectly influenced by student/student representative suggestions or complaints. A direct way, which is often chosen, is directly getting into contact with the national coordinator (= management committee member). A more indirect way is course evaluations and the semester report.

Alumni also have direct access to national coordinators, especially the French coordinator, as France is especially responsible for alumni matters. The alumni steering committee actively uses this possibility. In addition, two alumni representatives are members of the advisory board and have in this way a formal influence in programme discussions. The annual seminar, which is combined with an alumni meeting, is another platform for alumni to get into contact both with students and the management board and other faculty members.

The corporate world is integrated systematically in programme design and review. The major way to ensure its influence is the advisory board consisting of academics and practitioners; programme issues are to play an important role in the meetings. Moreover, there is feedback from companies giving internships or employing EMBS graduates as well as from companies being involved in the programme (e.g. via company project, company visit, guest speakers).

The programme, especially laid down in the study and examination rules, is based on national university regulations and the overall national legal framework. This major challenge for the whole programme has been met as all institutional bodies involved in the process (on the faculty and university level) in the four countries ratified the underlying specific EMBS programme structure, rules and processes. Necessary changes are to be accepted in the same way.

Appropriate programme design as to the subjects selected, the inclusion of up-to date and cross-functional issues, adequate delivery of the programme are a major issue of

management committee meetings. Assessment and decisions in this respect are based on market reviews, input of all stakeholder groups, especially the advisory board, alumni, students, corporate world, through informal and institutionalised data acquisition as described above.

The approval process is based on management committee decisions. In case formal faculty/university approval is necessary in one or more countries, the corresponding management committee members submit the necessary documents to the national bodies concerned. Important external bodies to be considered are accreditation authorities dealing with programme and/or institutional evaluation. In case of major changes during the (re-)accreditation period, their consent is necessary. Once the necessary approvals are given the regulations are published –in the study and examination rules, the module handbook, and potentially in the official university gazette– and become legally validated.

c. Periodic programme review

Review and revision of the programme is initiated by the following starting points: (i) critical points in student evaluations, teacher evaluations, (ii) recommendations of the quality representative, advisory board, alumni, and companies with EMBS relations, (iii) findings from experience or information regarding other programmes, (iv) remarks/ complaints of any other stakeholder. These sources of initialising changes may be seen as an internal process. There are also external causes for programme review, such as change of legislation/rules for HEIs in the countries and especially recommendations or requirements formulated by external accreditors.

The second (internal) step of a review process after initialisation consists of discussions within the management committee and with persons concerned as well as with external experts. This leads to suggestions made by the management committee. If necessary, discussions within the four universities take place. Implementation is examined and controlled internally by the administrative and/or the management committee.

Internal reviews are carried out continuously on the occasion of assessing evaluation results, and most management committee meetings directly or indirectly deal with potential programme up-dates and improvements. Moreover, all teachers are aware of being part of a continuous improvement process as far as their courses are concerned.

The biggest programme change in EMBS history so far has been the introduction of the so-called EMBS 2.0 with new courses (e.g. ERS), re-distribution of courses over countries (e.g. company project in Spain instead of Italy/France), a new approach for the thesis (now concentrated in Germany and no longer split between Germany and Spain; see base room documents and chapter 2). All this was due to a continuous review of programme implementation and evaluation results.

Fundamental reviews leading to major programme alterations such as the EMBS 2.0 mentioned before are not excluded and may become necessary from time to time. However, we have not felt an obligation to regularly create major programme changes. Nevertheless, EMBS is prepared to respond to major changes such as development of higher education systems, new challenges for the corporate world, changing international relations, new benchmarks set by competition - also through fundamental changes of EMBS objectives, strategies and programme implementation. We are confident that we are able to discuss them through the review function of our staff and their full integration in the academic and corporate world, the results of advisory board meetings, talks with our alumni and with company representatives related to our programme. Accreditation bodies may equally help to start such processes.

Quality assurance on operations

Student evaluations of courses/teachers, administrative staff and the semester in each country are considered important feedback. As explained above, they are either done on an individual university basis in each country or as EMBS-specific quality assurance activities.

Summarised examples of course evaluations in each university and an overall semester report are available in the base room. See a template of the questionnaire and a chart with the answers.

The evaluation results especially refer to teachers and improvement/change of contents, course material, delivery, assessments. The teachers themselves learn to assess their performance themselves and get hints whether and how to change course content and delivery in the future. As the quality representative and EMBS management dispose of the evaluations, they can consider discussion with the teacher affected on potential or necessary changes. This will happen if there are more substantial complaints, in serious cases direct action can be imposed by the management committee such as other forms of assessment, more/other documents and as last conceivable step a replacement of the teacher. Student evaluation, specifically the semester reports and the final graduate report, also refer to administrative matters, programme management, and overall programme coherence.

The effectiveness of learning and teaching is evaluated in relation to programme/course objectives and ILOs. Again student evaluations play a major role. But also teacher evaluations are taken into account as well as results from graduate final reports and feedback from companies involved in the programme (internship, company report etc.), and companies employing graduates. The results students show in the course assessments, thesis etc., plus graduate careers give at least an overall impression whether students and graduates come up with the intentions of the programme and in how far teaching and learning was effective.

EMBS management relies on the knowledge and experience of EMBS teachers as far as appropriate assessment approaches are concerned. Each local coordinator is, however, informed about the assessment methods to be applied in each course and can discuss them with the teacher or have them discussed in the management committee if they are innovative or may need some fine-tuning in the countries. More technical issues of the assessment regime are a matter of the administrative committee in accordance with the local regulations. Feedback on such points can also be found in the student semester reports.

The consistency of marking within countries is an obligation of the local coordinator; often it is the coordinator applying the four-eye assessment principle. Consistency over countries is the responsibility of the management committee, especially as far as reconciling different assessment/evaluation cultures are concerned. The administrative committee is involved as well as it is responsible for organising and monitoring all exams.

Feedback of assessed works to students is given. It depends, however, on the local universities and individual teachers how this is organised. Students can go through their exam papers, read the remarks and learn about evaluation details, asks questions and launch appeals. This is done on demand or in special courses/on special occasions, during certain time periods or teacher office hours. The common preparation procedure will lead to a more uniform approach across countries.



Summary and self-assessment

Quality assurance has been discovered as a crucial and challenging issue for the EMBS programme. In all four universities, quality assurance has been implemented to the extent required by national regulatory systems and accreditation institutions. Despite some common structure, differences over the countries exist. This and the special nature of a cross-country joint-degree programme require a compromise between the approaches of the four universities and the introduction of specific EMBS procedures.

EMBS defines the quality of students, academic staff, administrative staff, and programme as the core issues of a quality assurance system. These four fields are subject to evaluation by the people affected (students, graduates, and teachers). An external advisory board, made up of academicians, company representatives and alumni, gives additional input. In addition, information on market developments is collected and other external bodies such as accreditation agencies evaluate the programme. The results are assessed by an EMBS-external quality representative who formulates recommendations which are implemented by the management committee that is also responsible for providing feedback to the people carrying out the evaluations.

Programme design/review and programme alterations as well as operational changes in programme content, delivery, and assessments are therefore based on data from internal and external sources. A process of how to initialise and handle necessary changes has been introduced.

We are aware that quality assurance at EMBS is still in the developmental stage. The EMBS system was introduced rather recently and needs some more experience. Some implementation steps can be improved such as the smooth working of the advisory board, improving the integration of the quality representative and connectivity between university and EMBS evaluations.

There are also structural problems that are difficult to overcome. Different cultural approaches in the four countries with regard to aspects of quality control, which may be understood as inroads into the freedom of academic teaching, are one example. Another one is the central role of the management committee, acting as decision makers, teachers, quality controllers. This latter problem is due to the small size of the programme and the restraints following from this fact. It is also the reason that a full-fledged EMBS quality control unit with specific staff functions is not feasible. On the other hand, a programme for 25 to 30 students takes advantage of the an individualised atmosphere, where potential problems can be discussed informally and openly in an atmosphere of mutual understanding and quality deficiencies are more or less detected automatically. A process of how to initialise and handle necessary change has been introduced on the basis of EPAS standards.

Università di Trento (Italy)

Université Savoie Mont Blanc (France)

Universität Kassel (Germany)

Universidad de León (Spain)

