

Erasmus Mundus Master Courses

Recommendations and examples of good practice applied by Erasmus Mundus project consortia

The Executive Agency is providing the following information in order to disseminate examples considered as "good practice" during the implementation of Erasmus Mundus joint programmes. It has a particular focus on Erasmus Mundus Masters Courses.

This information on different aspects and management tools within an EM programme is addressed to current/future project coordinators so they can upgrade common practice. Following these examples does not form a mandatory requirement for consortia, and the Agency is therefore not responsible for any use made of these examples. However we strongly advise project consortia/coordinators to assess how these practices might be used or adapted to their own specific joint programme in order to enhance its quality and success.

MANAGEMENT STRUCTURES

- ✓ In suitable subject areas, a "Strategic Advisory Board" (SAB) may be established within the management structures of the consortium, which is composed of expert members from the industry/private sector. They can be asked to particularly focus their advice on employment needs/opportunities in the national/EU labour market. The SAB can thus contribute to the decision-making process of the consortium's Academic/Management Boards concerning adjustments required to tune the course to meet employers' needs/expectations in the subject area.
- ✓ The Alumni association of the Master programme could be involved in the management board meetings with an advisory function, and participate actively through the organisation of events for EM students, professors and staff members.
- ✓ The EM consortium could put in place internal coordination mechanisms, e.g. executive committees and steering committees, to closely monitor and support problem-solving and decision-making procedures within the partnership.

ACADEMIC ASPECTS

- ✓ It has proven very useful for consortium partners to receive a student "handover note" on the academic performance of each enrolled EM student before he/she starts the 2nd/3rd semester mobility at another partner institution. This tool can help providing transparency and coherence in monitoring student performance.
- ✓ A "Scholar Handbook" published on the course website is useful to outline expectations and guidelines for the academic and practical involvement of non-European guest lecturers/scholars in EM course implementation (scope of teaching/research tasks, activity report to consortium, administrative and financial matters, etc.).
- ✓ The consortium should agree on a joint Conversion Table of academic scores, which enables the partners to apply a tailor-made and transparent system of comparable academic evaluation of EM students within different partner institutions/countries. A concrete example is provided on the good practice page:
http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus_mundus/tools/good_practices_en.php
- ✓ The consortium could provide information to prospective students through curriculum presentations on its course website and offer mock-up examinations for a better preparation towards successful course participation.
- ✓ The course content should be adapted regularly according to the new developments/research results within the thematic area of the master. Students benefit from research collaboration of EM scholars teaching within the master course.
- ✓ The consortium might find useful to establish a teaching approach based on the concept of "collaborative research": the idea is to promote collaboration among students and teaching staff through activities within the field of studies/research with the support of a modelling platform and various digital communication environments. This could allow experts from different countries and with different specialization and professional experience to meet and collaborate in research, teaching and practice.
- ✓ The members of the consortium, staff and students could confirm their dedication to academic excellence by adopting a code of ethics (e.g. concerning plagiarism) according to which they are expected to strive for the highest levels of academic achievement and virtue.
- ✓ The consortium could establish a *co-supervision mechanism* where academic supervisors of one student from different consortium partners work closely together and provide feedback to each other.

MARKETING AND COURSE PROMOTION

- ✓ Associated Partners (particularly in non-European countries) involved in EM courses should be asked to create direct web links to the course in question. Using EM scholars as ambassadors for attracting high-profile students from abroad can be very useful, as well as cooperating with national stakeholders in the field of higher education such as Edufrance, DAAD, etc.

- ✓ A joint event/seminar/study visit could be organized by the associated partners in the field of study in order to reinforce their role and increase their visibility within the programme/ consortium.
- ✓ The "welcome/induction week" of a Master cohort at the beginning of the new academic year is a suitable moment to promote the course also to external stakeholders, e.g. by inviting interested parties such as representatives of embassies or EM students from non-European countries in order to encourage these personalities to further promote the programme in their home countries (via promotion material). Also the close involvement of alumni and representatives of the "world of work" is advisable in order to spread the word about the EM course and to use their networks and contacts.
- ✓ Each EM course must have a distinct project URL and should be well referenced with optimised key words on different internet search engines as well as various education Web Portals. Examples of web portals for presenting study programmes for potential applicants are: www.mastersportal.eu, www.phdportal.eu, or www.study-info.eu. Besides it has proven effective to use also Social Networks (Facebook, Twitter, etc.) as part of the online promotional activities.
- ✓ Innovative marketing and promotional initiatives such as inter-university student competitions on the main subject of the Master Course could enhance the Master's visibility and attractiveness.

COURSE / PROGRAMME EVALUATION

- ✓ It is considered very valuable to receive substantial student feedback after each semester and/or after the end of the course programme and during eventual summer/winter schools. For this purpose an (online) evaluation survey should be carried out covering a wide range of aspects from academic evaluation (course satisfaction, suggestions to improve teaching/learning, etc.) to practical information (employment perspectives, etc.). An example model of an evaluation survey used by an EMMC consortium has been published [here](#). Such feedback should be also provided by alumni of the master course and by visiting scholars.
- ✓ EMQA: Erasmus Mundus Quality Assurance for international HE programmes. EMQA helps consortia of Masters and Doctorate programmes to review their own quality against a structured set of quality components drawn from Higher Education across the EU. It is based on a participatory approach and allows self-assessing courses or programmes against a series of QA questions. Furthermore it provides examples of excellence from programmes analysed in the past. More information, including a "Handbook of Excellence", can be obtained from the website www.emqa.eu.
- ✓ The Consortium could set-up an external Quality Assurance Board composed of qualified external members. The board is requested to submit quality evaluation reports on the academic programme and the coordination structure of the master course.

STUDENT INTEGRATION

- ✓ Consortia are recommended to provide (online) Student Handbooks which aim at helping swift and smooth integration of students into the different academic/administrative/regional cultures in the participating institutions/countries.
- ✓ A substantial "*Acceptance Letter Package*" with practical information should be provided to selected EM students right after the notification of their selection (before they arrive at the first host institution).
- ✓ Some EM programmes have successfully applied a mentoring/"buddy" system for EM students (especially from non-European countries) in order to provide them with personalised guidance and practical assistance by local staff/students to help achieve better integration. This could comprise buddies collecting new students at the airport or at the railway station on their first arrival at each of the mobility sites.
- ✓ An annual meeting could be organized during which students have the opportunity to meet their counterparts of another on-going cohort/course edition and to attend e.g. the presentations of thesis projects or the graduation ceremony. A summer school could also be a suitable format.
- ✓ An integration week could be organized for students at master level jointly with the summer school of the Doctoral programme of the same thematic field. This would enhance the contact of students between master and doctoral level and outline future academic perspectives at an early stage.
- ✓ Local students of the programme could be appointed with student jobs to help organizing e.g. conversation tables in the local language. This would facilitate the advanced language learning esp. for non-European EM students.
- ✓ Additional academic/administrative support should be provided to students that have started the Master course with a delay due to visa problems.
- ✓ The consortium guarantees accomodation and assistance to the EM students with special needs.
- ✓ The consortium establishes an alumni association that provides information/services to the incoming students: tutorship, mentoring, internship promotion, access to events, etc.
- ✓ EM students could be more rapidly integrated by working in project teams with local students in order to facilitate their academic progress and to get familiar with the university's research programmes.

TRANSPARENCY AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION

- ✓ In order to avoid misleading information among EM students about their rights and obligations in the joint (Master) programme, consortia are advised to publish their model/template of the "Student Agreement" on the project website before course enrolment. This is a useful tool for transparency and conflict prevention.
- ✓ It has proven useful to include a Student Representative in the management and internal evaluation structures of the EM course, e.g. through invitations to board meetings of the partners.

- ✓ The nomination of an Ombudsman in view of easing potential conflicts. This person could be chosen from outside the academic staff involved in the programme and could intervene as facilitator when conflicts arise among students and teaching staff of the involved consortium partners.

USE OF IT TOOLS

- ✓ Online Application Procedure: use of IT tools for the student selection, thereby facilitating the partners' shared access to student applications (submitted documentation) and reducing considerably the selection procedure costs.
- ✓ Increased use of IT methods for joint lectures/seminars/discussions via Videoconferencing, thereby bringing together students from different cohorts (and host institutions), facilitating contacts with/between staff, and reducing the costs of physical mobility.
- ✓ In order to facilitate the internal evaluation process of EM courses, the partners could think of applying integrated technology through Web-based questionnaires (e.g. Survey Monkey, or Google-based surveys). This tool has served useful in the following ways: simple process for (multi-) annual course evaluations and/or specific activity evaluations; anonymity; uniform procedure for all partner institutions involved (independent of students' mobility schemes); automatic treatment of answers with statistics and graphics that are easily publishable on an on-line platform.

EMPLOYABILITY

- ✓ Providing internship options at industry partners (or research institutes), especially during the last semester for the thesis work, in order to support professional networking of the EM students for job search purposes.
- ✓ Seeking synergies with EM Joint Doctorate Programmes operating in similar fields through an "associated partnership" in order to open up future (doctoral) paths for students after their Master graduation.
- ✓ Implementation of an employment survey among the EM graduates (e.g. through social media such as LinkedIn, and alumni platforms in use by the coordinating university) to receive concrete job-related feedback from a cohort which helps measuring the overall success of an EM course. For the same reasons it is also recommended to maintain contact with alumni through a database and specific information and activities.

Read more recommendations on employability in the outputs of the Erasmus Mundus cluster on this topic:

http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus_mundus/clusters/employability_en.php

- ✓ During summer schools students have the opportunity to present the academic projects that they are working on. Prizes could be awarded to the best projects and contacts made between students and industries that later may lead to internships/jobs.
- ✓ The consortium could promote the participation of its students in a "Regional Academic / Industrial Forum" within the specific field of the master course, during which several activities could be organised, e.g. excursions to companies, forum meetings, discussions

between representatives of the department, research centres at the university campus, students and industry representatives.

- ✓ "Student assistantships" could be awarded in order to allow excellent students to get a detailed impression of the cooperation mechanisms between academia and industry and at the same time prepare for potential doctoral studies. These assistant contracts could also help non-scholarship holders from a financial point of view.
- ✓ Students are encouraged to co-publish scientific work in professional journals together with their course professors.
- ✓ The consortium puts efforts in order to establish an agreement with several companies that commit themselves to support the Master course by providing teaching resources (staff) and offering project-related work through internships for the 3rd / 4th semester. These internships may lead to permanent positions within the companies.
- ✓ The consortium establishes its own "Club of Friends". The objective would be that of providing regular information to a group of companies which are interested in recruiting graduates.
- ✓ The consortium encourages the participation of private sector companies as associated partners and directly involves them in the development of the course curricula, in employability and sustainability strategies.

SUSTAINABILITY

- ✓ Signature of a Letter of Sustainability by the individual consortium partners in which they confirm their commitment to continue the participation in the programme after the formal end of EU financial support.
- ✓ Opening specific course modules to other (non-EM) target groups: in some academic areas, esp. where there is a strong link to the professional world, it may be possible to open limited EM course modules to adult learners who are willing to pay for a short-term enrolment/involvement in view of enlarging their knowledge and skills. An example is the medical field, where professionals might have interest in a specific aspect in the subject area and would like to participate on a self-paying basis, e.g. during an intensive seminar or a summer school. This may enrich the exchange between EM students and professionals and helps the consortia to generate extra money in order to make their programme financially more sustainable.
- ✓ Fund-raising activities in order to collect more (non-EU) scholarships for the students. This is particularly interesting for consortia selected as "EM Brand Name" courses without any EU funding. Sources could come from national funding schemes (e.g. Ministry of Education), research grants and internships from the industry, regional grants provided by regional (/departmental) authorities, etc. There are also dedicated web portals which could help in seeking scholarships, such as www.scholarshipportal.eu.

- ✓ Associated partners and/or other external sponsors could be involved in the funding of "summer schools".
- ✓ The consortium should proactively provide comprehensive information concerning possible funding opportunities for non-scholarship holders in order to increase the financial basis of the programme.

Read more recommendations on sustainability in the outputs of the Erasmus Mundus cluster on this topic:

http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus_mundus/clusters/sustainability_en.php

For more information:

Examples of good practice

http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus_mundus/tools/good_practices_en.php

Action 1 beneficiaries' space

http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus_mundus/beneficiaries/beneficiaries_action_1_en.php