

**Assessment Report**  
**on the Arqus Joint Master's Programme**  
**“European Studies”**



**following the**  
**European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes**

**17<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the ZEVA Commission on November 8, 2022**

Study Programme	Joint Degree	ECTS	Programme Duration	Type of Programme	Annual Intake Capacity
European Studies	Master of Arts	120	2 years	Full-time	100 (25 per university)

**Degree-Awarding Partners:**

- **University of Leipzig/Germany** (Coordinating Institution)
- **University of Granada/Spain**
- **University of Graz/Austria**
- **Vilnius University/Lithuania**

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**Hanover, 1 August, 2022**

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## **I. Outcomes of the Review Process and Accreditation Decision**

### **1. Accreditation Decision of the ZEvA Commission, 8 November, 2022**

*The ZEvA Commission follows the recommendations of the expert panel and takes note of the consortium's written response to the accreditation report.*

*The commission accredits the Arqus Joint Master's programme in European Studies without conditions for a period of six years.*

*The accreditation decision is based on the standards and criteria stipulated in the European Approach for the Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes.*

## **2. Central Outcomes of the Assessment and Final Vote of the Expert Panel**

### **2.1 Summary of the Experts' Findings**

The experts have gained a very positive overall impression of the new joint Master's programme in European Studies. The programme is a direct outcome of a close, long-term cooperation between four distinguished research universities, all of which contribute profound academic expertise, sustainable resources and long-term international experience to this project. The experts are confident that the programme will be met with strong interest in the partner countries and beyond, as it is clearly distinct from other graduate programmes in this field in terms of content, profile and regional focus. The panel was particularly impressed by the diversity, the depth and the innovative blended learning approach of the programme, which makes it interesting for a larger target group of students, including those for whom physical mobility is hard to realize.

It will be of high importance to communicate these central features, as well as possible career paths for graduates, very clearly to applicants, students and the general public. The experts still see room for optimization in this regard. Also, in spite of the programme's focus on research, some more attention should be paid to qualifying students for employment outside academia.

The programme already shows a high level of integration, which nevertheless could be further enhanced in some respects, particularly as regards joint standards and procedures for student assessment, recognition and quality assurance.

### **2.2 Recommendations for Enhancement**

The experts give the following recommendations for the further development and enhancement of the programme:

#### Programme Profile and Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs)

- The programme's strong academic research focus should become more immediately evident in the description of the ILOs. Ideally, the profile of the programme should be made more transparent in its title or perhaps in a subtitle, to communicate it as clearly as possible to potential applicants and the general public.
- The programme's disciplinary focus and its emphasis on Central and Eastern Europe should be more strongly highlighted in the ILOs.
- The Diploma Supplement should include the complete list of ILOs given on the website and in the cooperation agreement. It should also describe possible career paths for graduates outside academic research in more detail. The same recommendation applies to the programme website and other public sources of information.

### Curriculum

- The thematic and regional focus of the programme may be gradually extended to include more elements of Economics, Finance and Peace and Security Studies, as well as classes centered on Northern, Southern or Mediterranean Europe.
- The experts strongly recommend paying more attention to imparting professional skills within the programme. Offering modules taught by practitioners could be considered.
- The students should be strongly encouraged to absolve a professional internship in the course of the programme. They should also be urgently advised to actually go abroad for at least one semester instead of opting for virtual mobility only.
- In view of the current labour market requirements for graduates of European Studies, students should be encouraged to learn a second foreign language, ideally a second European language apart from English.

### Admission and Recognition

- The experts recommend raising the minimum language requirements for entering the programme from level B2 to level C1 according to the CEFR.
- The consortium should develop a written guideline as a decision basis for the joint recognition of prior learning.

### Teaching and Assessment

- In the future, the consortium should take even stronger efforts to work towards joint standards of online teaching and assessment.

### Quality Assurance

- The consortium should pay particular attention to a close monitoring of student workload across the entire programme.
- The joint quality assurance procedures of the consortium should be systematized and formalized to a slightly higher degree, as, for example, by means of concise written guidelines or process descriptions.
- In addition to written surveys, the consortium should rely even more strongly on dialogue-based approaches in quality assurance.
- The consortium might consider increasing the number of student representatives in the Steering Committee by involving at least one student from each university.

*1 Outcomes of the Review Process and Accreditation Decision*

*2 Central Outcomes of the Assessment and Final Vote of the Expert Panel*

### **2.3 Final Vote of the Expert Panel**

The expert panel recommends the accreditation of the Arqus Joint Master's programme in European Studies without conditions.

In accordance with the stipulations of the European Approach for the Quality Assurance of Joint Study Programmes, accreditation is recommended for a period of six years.

## **II. Assessment Report of the Expert Panel**

### **1. Purpose, Design and Context of the Assessment Procedure**

In January 2022, ZEvA Hannover received the mandate from the University of Leipzig to conduct an external quality assessment of the Joint Master's programme in European Studies. The programme had been jointly developed by four European universities in the context of the Arqus European University Alliance, with the University of Leipzig functioning as the coordinating institution.

The consortium decided to apply for an accreditation within the framework of the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Study Programmes (hereinafter: EA). The European Approach has been implemented fully or partly in the national legislative frameworks of all member countries of the consortium. Existing limitations or formal restrictions at national level do not apply to the Master's programme in European Studies. Hence, the accreditation decision of ZEvA can be recognized in all partner countries.

Prior to the start of the review procedure, the German Accreditation Council (*Akkreditierungsrat*) was officially notified by the University of Leipzig, as stipulated in § 33 of the German *Musterrechtsverordnung*.

For the purpose of the assessment, ZEvA assembled an expert panel combining expertise in the relevant subject disciplines (Political Science, International Relations, Modern History), knowledge of the potential labor market(s) for graduates of the programme as well as experience in quality assurance in higher education. The panel was composed of experts from three European countries – all of them member countries of the consortium – and also included one student expert. The panel was approved by the ZEvA Commission and by the programme consortium.

The experts received written background information on the European Approach and further documents and templates for their assistance from the agency.

The consortium jointly submitted a self-evaluation report in English language, which contained extensive information about all partner institutions and their respective national frameworks, as well as an appendix of relevant documents (cooperation agreement including appendices, regulations for student assessment, selection and admission, CVs of core faculty, information material for students, course handbook/module descriptions, sample Diploma Supplement etc.). The self-report was forwarded to the experts for desktop validation.

On-site talks with the representatives of the European Studies consortium took place on June 20, 2022. Due to the ongoing restrictions and risks imposed by the Corona pandemic the talks were conducted online. A few days prior to the talks with the members of the consortium, the experts and the ZEvA project coordinator met online to discuss the documents provided and to clarify their roles and tasks.



*II Assessment Report of the Expert Panel*

*1 Purpose, Design and Context of the Assessment Procedure*

Representatives of all degree-awarding universities participated in the talks, including members of the university leadership boards, administrative staff, academic and administrative programme coordinators and members of the teaching faculty. As the programme had not yet enrolled any students at that point in time, students and graduates of similar and/or closely related programmes offered by the partner universities were interviewed instead.

This assessment report is based on the self-evaluation report of the European Studies consortium and the outcomes of the online talks. It is meant to serve as a basis for the ZEvA accreditation decision and, where applicable, as a reference document for the recognition of this decision by the responsible national bodies, including the German Accreditation Council.

The experts would like to thank all members of the consortium for the comprehensive self-evaluation report and the open, constructive discussion during the online talks.

## **2. Introduction: The Study Programme at a Glance**

The Arqus European University Alliance was established in 2018 and brings together the universities of Bergen, Granada, Graz, Leipzig, Lyon, Padua and Vilnius who share extensive experience in joint projects and a common profile as internationalized institutions. The Alliance aspires to build on the member universities' prior experience in cooperation in order to achieve a high level of integration. Its mission is to enhance the education of critically engaged European and global citizens who are able and willing to contribute to a multicultural, multilingual and inclusive Europe and to better respond to the societal challenges of the 21st century in Europe and beyond.

The Master's programme in European Studies is to contribute to fulfilling this educational mission. It was jointly developed by four member universities of the Arqus Alliance (Leipzig, Graz, Vilnius and Granada), all of which have brought their special expertise and perspectives into the curriculum. All partner universities already run other degree programmes in European Studies or closely related fields, which are to provide a basis for the new Master's programme, too.

The consortium is aiming at enrolling the first cohort of students in the autumn of 2023. The maximum intake capacity per year lies at a total of 25 students per partner university.

The programme comprises a total of 120 ECTS credits, to be obtained within the period of two years. It is designed as a full-time programme, but is nevertheless open for students with additional family or work obligations.

Graduates are to be awarded a Master of Arts from all four partner universities (joint degree).

The prime language of instruction and assessment is to be English throughout, even though students get the opportunity to take elective classes taught in one of the local languages. The programme aims at Bachelor graduates (primarily in the Humanities and Social Sciences) from across Europe who wish to obtain in-depth knowledge and research competence in the interdisciplinary field of European Studies.

The programme aims at qualifying students for a further career primarily in research, non-governmental organisations or for various other positions across the economic, public service, civil society, and knowledge production sectors.

In didactic terms, the Master's programme in European Studies applies a blended learning approach. Compulsory online classes directed at the entire cohort of students are combined with in-class electives taught locally by the four member universities. All students are strongly encouraged to spend time at a minimum of two universities in the course of the programme, but physical mobility is not obligatory. As the responsibility for the online classes is shared between the four partners, the consortium ensures that all students receive an international learning experience in the context of the hybrid modules. Also, students have the option of absolving a fully credited internship outside the universities in order to further develop their professional skills.

### 3. Quality Assessment of the Study Programme

#### 3.1 Eligibility

##### 3.1.1 Status

*The institutions that offer a joint programme should 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.*

All degree-awarding partners within the European Studies consortium are public research universities, among them some of the oldest and most renowned higher education institutions in Europe. As such, they are fully recognized by the authorities in their respective countries and are entitled to participate actively in joint programmes.

Furthermore, all four partners are able to award a joint degree and intend to do so in the context of the Master's programme in European Studies, as stipulated in the cooperation agreement.

The awarded degree (Master of Arts in European Studies) is clearly associated with the second cycle of qualifications in the Framework of Qualifications for the European Higher Education Area. All universities involved have ensured that the awarded degree is in line with their national higher education degree systems. The relevant legislative regulations of the four countries are explicitly referred to in Article 3 of the cooperation agreement.

##### Experts' Appraisal

The experts have no doubt whatsoever that the members of the Arqus European Studies consortium and the jointly awarded degree fulfil all formal requirements of the European Approach. Based on the formal stipulations of the cooperation agreement it can be safely assumed without further proof that the joint degree is in accordance with national legislative demands and will therefore be fully recognized in the respective countries.

***The experts regard the standard as fulfilled.***

##### 3.1.2 Joint Design and Delivery

*The joint programme should be offered jointly, involving all cooperating institutions in the design and delivery of the programme.*

As was explained in the self-evaluation report of the consortium and confirmed by the representatives of the consortium in the course of the online talks, there have been strong ties between the four cooperating institutions for a long time, which were further consolidated and strengthened with the foundation of the Arqus European University Alliance in 2018. The joint Master's programme is a direct outcome of this close cooperation, and is hence fundamentally

based on the principle of jointness in teaching and research. The partners developed the programme together in the course of about two years.

The curriculum is designed in such a way that it could not be delivered by any of their partners on their own. Teaching responsibilities are equally shared between the partners, each university taking the main responsibility for one or two of the compulsory online seminars. In addition, there is a joint Master's colloquium offered for all students in Module 11.

All four universities are equally involved in the process of student selection and admission, as well as the quality assurance and continuous enhancement of the programme. This is mainly ensured by a joint Steering Committee in which all partners are represented and which is chaired by the University of Leipzig as the coordinating institution. The Steering Committee may also set up additional commissions wherever necessary, as e.g. for student selection or for the purpose of curricular review.

### Experts' Appraisal

Based on the facts outlined above, the experts conclude that the Master's programme in European Studies is to be regarded as a joint study programme as defined by the European Approach. The programme is clearly a flagship project embedded into the wider context and overarching strategy of a European University Alliance. The principles of joint design and delivery thus lie at its very core, shaping both the curriculum and the organizational framework of the programme. Some partners seem to take over a slightly more prominent role in the programme (especially the University of Leipzig as coordinating institution), but there is no doubt that responsibilities for the programme are shared between all partners.

**The experts regard the standard as fulfilled.**

#### 3.1.3 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.*

The universities of the Arqus Alliance have laid down the underlying terms and conditions of their joint programme in a cooperation agreement. The agreement has been signed by all partners and was presented to the expert panel as part of the self-evaluation report. There are four annexes to the agreement (concept note, rules of progression, grade conversion table, details on admission requirements as regards language proficiency), all of which were also

included in the documents provided for the purpose of the external assessment.

The agreement clearly stipulates that the four partners are to award a joint Master's degree upon completion of the programme and it makes explicit reference to the underlying legal prerequisites in the four countries. It contains basic regulations regarding the raising of tuition and administrative fees, degree-awarding and mutual recognition of credits, the procedure for student application, selection and admission, joint quality assurance, as well as the mobility of students and staff. The concept note (Annex 1) describes these and other aspects of the programme, including the alignment of intended learning outcomes, contents and student assessment methods, more comprehensively.

Annex 4 to the Agreement ("Rules of Progression") briefly outlines the general regulations of each cooperating university regarding class attendance, as well as procedures and deadlines in case of failed examinations.

Further, locally applying rules on student examination, grading and assessment can be found in the specific institutional and national regulations of the participating universities, all of which are available in the respective national languages and in English translation (apart from the regulations of the University of Leipzig, which were made available to the experts in German only).

#### Experts' Appraisal

The experts conclude that the consortium has sufficiently regulated all central issues regarding the joint management and coordination of the study programme in its cooperation agreement and the supplementary documents. The roles and responsibilities of all partners are laid out clearly, and there are binding regulations on all central formal, legal and organizational aspects of the cooperation.

For the sake of transparency, all relevant study and assessment regulations applying at the University of Leipzig should be made available to the students in English translation (cf. Chapter 3.8 of this report).

From the experts' point of view, the written agreements underlying the study programme in European Studies fully satisfy the requirements of the European Approach.

**The experts regard the standard as *fulfilled*.**

### **3.2 Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs)**

#### **3.2.1 Level**

*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).*

The mission and the intended learning outcomes of the joint Master's programme are listed in Article 8 of the Cooperation Agreement and are also laid out on the programme website. In detail, they are described as follows:

- *Knowledge and advanced understanding of the complex processes of European integration, Europeanization, and globalization, together with the ability to follow their developments, critically assess them, and learn how concepts of Europeanization and globalization have been and can be applied in and to various European regions and their relationships with other world regions and international organizations;*
- *Knowledge and understanding of as well as the ability to explain how global and regional events shape Europe's and Europeans' role as (a) global actor(s);*
- *The ability to apply different theories, perspectives, and methods stemming from different analytical and theoretical approaches to a critical analysis of European integration, the EU's global role, and relations with other actors while combining them in a comprehensive manner;*
- *Knowledge and understanding of European institutions and decision-making policies and the ability to conduct independent scholarly analysis;*
- *The ability to apply different research methodologies and methods in an integrated way, compare concepts, and investigate their mutual interactions;*
- *Knowledge and awareness of one's own rootedness in a specific discipline and academic culture and the opportunity to become familiar with different academic ways of looking at a variety of European actors and the correlation with processes of globalization;*
- *The ability to communicate effectively using the appropriate terminology, engaging with different audiences;*
- *The ability to apply sociopolitical insights and concepts in the design and execution of an independent study or research project and present it in a scientifically sound paper, report, or thesis;*
- *The ability to develop general and professional skills for a wide range of possible future employment in a global society;*
- *The ability to develop the necessary social and communicative skills to work both independently and in collaboration with others in a profoundly multidisciplinary and multicultural context.*

By stipulating them in the cooperation agreement all partners have committed themselves to the intended learning outcomes of the programme.

The first five of the above listed ILOs are also included in the sample Diploma Supplement for the programme.

The ILOs themselves do not go into detail about possible employment opportunities and career paths for graduates of the programme. However, the concept note (Annex 1 to the Cooperation

Agreement) mentions that graduates would be qualified to work “work as experts, analysts, advisors, and consultants in various governmental, non-governmental, and private institutions but also to pursue research activities in various academic institutions” (cf. page 29).

### 3.2.2 Disciplinary field

*The intended learning outcomes should comprise knowledge, skills, and competencies in the respective disciplinary field(s).*

As already laid out above, the ILOs comprise knowledge, skills and competencies in the interdisciplinary field of European Studies, with a particular focus on the acquisition of in-depth knowledge and research competence.

### 3.2.3 Achievement

*The programme should be able to demonstrate that the intended learning outcomes are achieved.*

As the programme has not yet started, this standard is not applicable here. Once the programme has produced the first graduates, the achievement of the intended learning outcomes may be demonstrated by the quality of the Master's theses, by collected data on student performance and progression or by the results of graduate surveys.

### 3.2.4 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..*

The standard is not applicable to this programme.

## Experts' Appraisal

The experts assert that the intended learning outcomes of the programme are in line with the Master's level as described by the Framework for Qualifications in the European Higher Education Area (FQ-EHEA) and the respective national qualifications frameworks deriving from it. Also, they are compliant with Level 7 of the European Qualification Framework (EQF).

By and large, all central elements of the FQ-EHEA are clearly reflected in the ILOs of the Master's programme in European Studies: these include the acquisition of specialized knowledge in a complex and multidisciplinary field, as well as the enhancement of the students'

critical awareness and, most prominently, their research capacities. Acquisition of advanced soft skills, especially those of relevance for academic and non-academic labor markets, is also an integral part of the ILOs. The ILOs are published online and in the Diploma Supplement.

However, the experts see room for optimization as regards the transparency and clarity of the programme profile, which still remains somewhat vague in the description of the intended learning outcomes. The particular academic, regional and disciplinary focus of the programme does not yet become sufficiently clear.

First of all, it should be drawn out even more clearly in the descriptions that the joint Master's programme in European Studies is a strongly research-oriented, academic programme which does not necessarily impart the professional skills and qualifications required, for instance, for employment positions at EU institutions or governmental organizations. Ideally, the research focus of the programme should be made more transparent in its title or perhaps in a subtitle, to communicate it as clearly as possible to potential applicants and the general public. A suggestion would be to call the programme for instance a 'Joint **Research** Master's Programme in "European Studies"'.

Judging from the course syllabi, the programme seems to put a particular emphasis on Eastern and Southeastern Europe. The programme coordinators confirmed during the talks with the experts that it had been a deliberate decision to give more attention to regions that were often somewhat neglected in the context of European Studies. The experts recommend highlighting this unique feature more explicitly in the descriptions of the programme and its objectives.

The disciplinary focus of the programme could also be pointed out more explicitly in the ILOs. The field of European Studies is mainly approached from the angle of History, Law, as well as Political and Social Sciences. Elements of Economics are there in the programme, but are not (yet) very prominent (cf. Chapter 3.3).

Finally, the Diploma Supplement should include the complete list of ILOs given on the website and in the cooperation agreement. In particular, this document should describe possible career paths for graduates outside academic research in a bit more detail, as it is meant to be a prime source of information for employers. The same recommendation applies, however, to the programme website or other public sources of information.

**The experts regard the standard as *fulfilled*.**

### **3.3 Study Programme**

#### **3.3.1 Curriculum**

*The structure and content of the curriculum should be fit to enable the students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.*

The structural and curricular design of the joint Master's programme in European Studies can be summarized as follows:



There are two types of modules within the programme. On the one hand, there are five compulsory modules (three in the first semester and one each in the second and third semesters) that are offered jointly by the consortium and thus enable virtual mobility between the study places. In these modules students come together for joint classes, and lecturers from all participating universities teach on topics they are particularly qualified for. As a rule, these modules consist of one jointly offered online course and one offline course. The offline course is taught by local lecturers but is thematically and methodologically related to the online course, deepening the learning objectives of the module using local specialized knowledge.

In addition, there is a compulsory joint online colloquium in the final semester which is directed at all students who are in the process of writing their Master's thesis.

Besides a general introduction to the field of European Studies in Module 1, these compulsory modules approach the thematic core of the programme from various disciplinary angles (Law, History, Political Science), with a special focus on European foreign policies (Module 4) and developmental policies (Module 7).

The other half of the programme consists of five elective modules that the partner institutions offer according to their individual strengths and research foci. Each of these modules consists of two locally taught classes (offline) that are dedicated to a joint, overarching topic as e.g. Regions of Europe or Social Transformations in Europe. Students take these elective classes at the four partner universities according to their chosen mobility paths and personal interests.

In the elective modules 9 and 10, students may also choose to replace offline classes by a research internship at one of the partner universities or by a professional internship outside the university.

As already mentioned above, physical mobility is strongly recommended, but not mandatory. The jointly taught online classes are regarded as sufficient to meet the targets of the programme as regards joint teaching and learning and mobility.

### Experts' Appraisal

The experts have gained a positive overall impression as regards the structure and content of the study programme, but would like to give a number of recommendations for further enhancement.

The curriculum is well-structured with a view to the intended learning outcomes of the programme. The comprehensive introductory courses of the first semester will enable students to acquire the necessary methodic basis to approach the field of European Studies from different analytical and theoretical angles and to understand the problems of combining methods from different disciplinary contexts. Considering the different cultural, regional and academic backgrounds of the students, this is essential for a successful learning process. The introductory courses will also help students to critically examine Eurocentric traditions of thought and to develop a self-reflective and critical awareness of their own roots in a particular discipline and academic culture.

Apart from this theoretical foundation, students have sufficient opportunity to develop their own research interests in the course of the programme and to prepare for their Master's thesis. The experts also appreciate the joint Master's colloquium, which is well in line with the strong research-orientation of the programme.

Some aspects and contributing disciplines of European Studies are certainly more prominent in the curriculum than others. In particular, the experts were missing elements of Economics in the curriculum, as e.g. issues of EU finance and trade regulations. Peace and Security Studies seemed to be less present in the curriculum, too. As was reported during the online talks, both areas are actually touched upon in some modules, but are not of central importance and hence not very clearly drawn out in the course descriptions. The Arqus consortium might consider changing this in the future for the sake of a more comprehensive disciplinary approach and may consider rebalancing, for instance, modules with a focus on history and religion to the benefit of the underrepresented disciplines. Regardless of whether this happens or not, the actual focus of the programme should be made as transparent as possible in the programme descriptions (cf. chapter 3.2 of this report).

The same recommendation applies to the regional focus of the programme, which is clearly and deliberately on Eastern and Southeastern Europe. Considering the research profiles of the cooperating institutions, this comes as no surprise and is perfectly legitimate, even though the experts would appreciate it if other macro-regions of Europe (as e.g. Northern, Southern or Mediterranean Europe) were given a bit more weight and space in the long run. In any case, it will be important to communicate the regional focus of the programme clearly to the general public, as already laid out above.

Furthermore, the experts strongly recommend paying more attention to imparting professional skills within the programme, in spite of the research-centered programme profile. There are several possible ways of achieving this: for example, the theory-based part of the curriculum could be slightly reduced in favour of one or two skills-based classes. Such classes could also be taught by professionals from outside academia, perhaps in the context of a summer academy. Also, students should be strongly encouraged to take internships outside the university in order to broaden their horizons and further develop non-academic skills required on the employment market. The experts would actually be in favour of mandatory internships, but have learned during the online talks that there are also some regulatory obstacles speaking against this.

As regards student mobility, the experts have come to the conclusion that students will probably have a sufficiently international and intercultural learning experience even if they decide against spending one or two semesters abroad and opt for the virtual mobility only. There are some obvious advantages to the joint online courses: they bring all students at all four study places together and make the programme attractive for students who cannot be physically mobile for personal reasons. Regardless of that, physical mobility should be the rule rather than the exception. The consortium should therefore strongly encourage students to actually go abroad in order to further develop their language skills and intercultural competences. Physical mobility should also be promoted on the programme website and in other written sources of information.

Finally, the experts recommend encouraging the students to learn a second foreign language – ideally a European language – apart from English, to better prepare for the requirements of the non-academic labour market for graduates of European Studies. As the experts learned during the online talks, the consortium has very consciously decided against integrating language training into the curriculum, and the experts do of course respect this decision. Nevertheless, it would be important to inform students sufficiently about the typical qualifications required for working positions outside the higher education sector.

**The experts regard the standard as *fulfilled*.**

### 3.3.2 Credits

*The European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) should be applied properly and the distribution of credits should be clear.*

The study programme is fully modularized, and the ECTS is applied throughout. All compulsory and elective modules of the first three semesters are credited with 10 ECTS credits and comprise two separate classes (or, in the case of Module 9, an optional internship). In the fourth and final semester, each partner university offers one 5-credit elective, in addition to a joint online colloquium which also comprises 5 credits. For the Master's thesis, all partners award 20 ECTS credits.

Each credit point equals an average student workload of 25-30 hours, depending on the different national and institutional regulations applying at the partner universities.

The distribution of the credits is clearly laid out in the course catalogue and in a separate overview of the curriculum and the possible progression paths through the programme. It is also briefly outlined on the programme website.

#### Experts' Appraisal

From the experts' point of view, the curricular structure and the awarding of credits within the programme are very clearly and transparently described. The application of the ECTS is fully in line with the recommendations of the ECTS Users' Guide.

A full harmonization of the workload calculation throughout the programme would be desirable, but would probably not be possible due to conflicting formal regulations at the cooperating institutions. In view of this fact, the experts do not recommend any changes in this regard, also considering that the workload calculation at each of the four universities lies within the regular range.

The crediting of the thesis (20 credits plus 5 credit colloquium) is adequate with regard to the strongly research-oriented profile of the programme.

The experts have discussed whether it would be worthwhile to occasionally open up the relatively rigid 10-ECTS-structure of the modules in favour of introducing a number of smaller

educational units. This may have the advantage of being able to address an even wider range of topics or to integrate more skills-based elements in the curriculum. However, the current modular structure is still regarded as entirely acceptable, with no immediate need for changes. Time will show whether these will be necessary with a view to the students' actual workload, success and progression through the programme. The experts also take note of the fact that the chosen modular structure has been well tried and tested in other, similar programmes offered by the partner universities, especially at the University of Leipzig.

In most of the modules the calculated share of self-study time is relatively high as compared to in-class time. The experts are aware that this is not unusual for a Master's programme in this discipline, even though they recommend checking the accuracy of the workload calculations carefully in the future (cf. Chapter 3.3.3).

**The experts regard the standard as fulfilled.**

### 3.3.3 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.*

The Master's programme in European Studies amounts to a total student workload of 120 ECTS credits (60 ECTS credits per year, 30 credits per semester).

The partner universities have developed different ways of monitoring student workload, based on their own internal regulations and procedures for quality assurance in teaching and learning. These are described in detail in the self-report of the consortium and are also partly reflected in the sample questionnaires for course evaluation that were presented to the expert panel as an annex to the self-report.

Apart from regular written surveys, other measures may be applied to monitor the student workload, as e.g. regular interviews with the students for the purpose of quality assurance or direct feedback from student representatives.

At the University of Graz, a systematic monitoring of student workload is only to be introduced this coming autumn, by means of a new app.

The central results of all quality surveys that are conducted in the programme on a local level will be summarized in annual quality reports which have to be submitted by all partners. The reports will be discussed in regular meetings of the Steering Committee or in other regular meetings of the consortium, and measures for improvement will be jointly decided upon if necessary.

In addition to the local surveys, which usually apply to the level of individual classes or modules, the consortium is planning to conduct a joint online survey twice a year in order to

measure the students' satisfaction with the entire programme (cf. chapter 3.9 of this report). This comprehensive survey is designed with a special view to the international profile of the programme and can also serve to gain a better picture of the general developments as regards student workload and student success in the course of the programme.

### Experts' Appraisal

As regards the total student workload and the number of credits awarded, the Master's programme in European Studies is in full accordance with the Framework of Qualifications for the European Higher Education Area.

Student workload is continuously monitored both at the level of the educational components and at the overall programme level. The quality assurance procedures of the consortium ensure that all partners are informed about the results of the surveys and can take joint measures in response if required. However, based on the written material and the outcomes of the online talks, the experts advise the consortium to pay particular attention to this aspect of quality once the programme has been started – also considering that the programme explicitly welcomes students with additional work or family obligations.

**The experts regard the standard as *fulfilled*.**

## **3.4 Admission and Recognition**

### 3.4.1 Admission

*The admission requirements and selection procedures should be appropriate in light of the programme's level and discipline.*

The application and selection procedure for the programme is jointly organized.

The steering committee will annually decide on the maximum number of students to be accepted into the programme in line with the regulations on student capacity that apply at each partner institution. Capacities will be published in advance on the programme website. The consortium aims at a balanced distribution of students across the four partner institutions. All applicants have to name their preferred entrance university and mobility paths as part of the application.

The consortium elects a selection committee with one member per partner university.

The selection and admission process consists of three basic steps.

The coordinating university collects all applications, checks them in a first step against the criteria of general formal eligibility, and provides a list of applicants that passed the eligibility check to the chosen priority 1- and 2 entrance universities. According to the concept note (Annex 1 to the Cooperation Agreement), the formal eligibility criteria are a Bachelor's degree or equivalent degree in the humanities and social sciences, as well as proficiency in English

at B2 level according to the CEFR. In exceptional cases, Bachelor graduates from programmes in other disciplinary areas (as e.g. life sciences) may also be admitted in exceptional cases. All candidates also have to hand in a motivation letter along with their formal certificates.

After a second check based on the selection criteria, including specific language requirements, each university produces a ranking list of 25 - 40 candidates for interviews. Based on the evaluation of both, the application documents and the results of the interviews by the respective university, a ranking of candidates according to the following criteria will be created:

- thematic and methodological fit as well as examination results of previous studies – 40 per cent;
- motivation as expressed in the application – 15 per cent;
- performance and linguistic competencies corresponding to a minimum of B2, C1 being an asset, according to the Common European Framework of References for Languages (CEFR) during the interview – 30 per cent;
- extra-curricular activities so far exercised and additional language competencies – 15 per cent.

On the basis of these rankings the selection committee decides in a joint selection meeting about the allocation of study places, as well as mobility places with a view to the number of places available at the individual institutions. The decision of the selection committee will be sent by email to the applicant. Students are formally admitted after the joint selection process and enrolled according to the university's regulations. The final enrolment takes place after the verification of the original admission documents, which have to be submitted as certified originals according to the legal requirements. International Offices, local coordinators, and central administration at each partner institutions will support this procedure.

### Experts' Appraisal

The experts regard the admission requirements and the selection procedure as appropriate in light of the desired qualification level and the academic disciplines involved. Only as regards the language requirements, the panel recommends raising the minimum entrance level from B2 to C1 according to the CEFR, to make sure that all students will be able to fully master the requirements of this post-graduate programme.

**The experts regard the standard as *fulfilled*.**

### 3.4.2 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.*

Credits awarded by the four partners within the study programme are automatically recognized across the consortium, as stipulated in the cooperation agreement.

Recognition of prior learning is also possible. Each recognition procedure is centrally managed and documented by the University of Leipzig as the coordinating university of the consortium. That is, applications for recognition have to be directed to the University of Leipzig, and the decision regarding recognition is then jointly taken by a committee of examiners in which all partners of the Arqus consortium are represented. In case only locally taught modules are concerned, the relevant national and institutional regulations of the respective university apply, and the formal recognition decision is taken exclusively at the level of the individual university.

According to the self-report, recognition of prior learning within the consortium is conducted based on the equivalence of learning outcomes and the stipulations of the Lisbon Convention. At the University of Leipzig, this is also made clear in the programme-related Regulations for Student Examination and Assessment. For the other three partners, there is no such documentary proof.

### Experts' Appraisal

In spite of the lack of comprehensive documentation, the experts have full confidence that all the participating universities as European institutions within a European University Alliance have committed themselves to the central principles of the Lisbon convention when it comes to the recognition of prior learning.

Nevertheless, it seems advisable to the experts to lay down a few central joint principles and guidelines for recognition in a written document to provide a more solid basis for future decisions. In particular, such guidelines should explicitly integrate the central principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention, including a possibility to appeal against a recognition decision.

**The experts regard the standard as fulfilled.**

## **3.5 Learning, Teaching and Assessment**

### 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.*

As already explained above, the compulsory modules of the first, second and third semester are based on a hybrid teaching approach, combining local in-class seminars with jointly taught online classes. The Master's colloquium in the fourth semester (Module 11) is conducted online only.

Most of the elective modules consist of one or two seminars which are taught in an offline classroom setting. In two modules, the seminars may be replaced by participation in research projects or by a professional internship, depending on the student's personal choice.

The programme coordinators of all four universities confirmed that as regards e-learning and blended learning formats they could all build on solid experience gained during the pandemic of the last two years. Based on that, the partners had intensely discussed the didactic approach when jointly developing the programme, and had tried to identify best practices. Lecturers are offered additional training seminars on online and hybrid teaching.

The quality of online teaching will also be regularly addressed as part of the quality assurance of the programme, as, for instance, in the context of the general student surveys.

### 3.5.2 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.*

The dominant type of assessment within the programme are written essays (usually about 4.000 words). Other common types of examination are oral exams, presentations or written exams, depending on the disciplinary approach and the local regulations of each university.

With a view to the qualification goals of this particular programme, stronger emphasis is also placed on portfolios for the assessment of students, especially in the hybrid modules. With a portfolio, students are to demonstrate the ability to develop, implement and present concepts, develop interdisciplinary solutions and, if necessary, to work as part of a project team. A portfolio may consist of several elements, as e.g. presentations, book reviews, reaction papers, podcasts, project work etc. The exact design of the portfolio assessment is announced by the lecturers at the beginning of the module.

Students who choose to absolve a professional internship or a research internship have to submit an internship report to demonstrate the achievement of the intended learning outcomes.

On principle, all examinations relate to the intended learning outcomes of the entire module.

#### Experts' Appraisal

The experts commended the Arqus consortium on the careful planning of their joint didactic approach. It has become apparent in the course of the online talks that the partners have taken the implications of a blended learning and teaching concept into careful consideration, even if it is still at a somewhat experimental stage and might have to be further developed based on future experience. The partners stressed during the talks that online teaching will not be limited to uploading videos, but needs to go beyond this if the intended learning outcomes of the programme are to be achieved. The experts fully agree with this and find themselves convinced by the overall teaching approach of the programme. The consortium is nevertheless encouraged to continue the process of developing joint standards and best practices for online teaching and assessment and to maintain close communication about this issue in the future.



Apart from the hybrid modules, in-class seminars are the most frequently applied form of teaching, which is in full accordance with the profile, intended learning outcomes and disciplinary focus of the programme. The internships provide some more variation here, even if only as an elective option. As already mentioned above, however, the experts would be in favour of compulsory internships in consideration of the graduates' potential employability goals.

In the experts's opinion, the chosen forms of assessment correspond well with the intended learning outcomes of the programme. With a view to the research-oriented programme profile it seems perfectly adequate to choose essays as the most prominent type of assessment, complemented by portfolios, presentations and oral examinations as more skills-based forms of examination. However, the consortium should always take care to continuously ensure a sufficient diversity of assessment forms throughout the programme.

The experts fully understand that different disciplinary traditions as well as the institutional and national regulations of the four partner universities need to be accounted for when it comes to student assessment. Also, the portfolios applied in the hybrid modules already contribute well to the goal of creating a truly integrated assessment system for the programme. In spite of that, the consortium should take even stronger efforts in the future to work towards joint standards of student assessment and ensure that these are implemented consistently across the consortium. Rather than the local examination committees, the central Steering Committee of the programme will play a decisive role in this.

**The experts regard the standard as *fulfilled*.**

### **3.6 Student Support**

*The student support services should contribute to the achievement of the intended learning outcomes. They should take into account specific challenges of mobile students.*

As was described in the self-report and further underlined in the course of the online talks, all four cooperating universities dispose of various support services that the students of the Master's programme in European Studies can benefit from.

Most importantly, there is a local coordinator at each of the four study places who offers all necessary advice and support to students and helps them with onboarding after admission as well as with all organizational matters during the study period. Students are encouraged to contact the local coordinators in case of difficulties or uncertainties of all kinds. The coordinators also meet regularly with student representatives to ensure the programme runs smoothly. They also provide students with information about scholarships, part-time jobs and internships.

Upon admission, students receive support and information (e.g. on accommodation, visa, insurance, study programme, administrative procedures etc.) before the beginning of the academic year.

Furthermore, special study guides and a student handbook have been created as a written source of information and are to be published online once the programme is running.

Local orientation days are offered before the start of the lecture period. They make it easier for the students to settle in by helping them with all administrative procedures (e.g. enrollment, city registration, applying for a residence permit, health insurance, etc.) and by familiarizing them with the infrastructure (e.g. libraries, online tools, international centers, career services and cafeterias).

Each participating university has a well-developed institutional setting for the promotion of equal opportunities and diversity as well as for providing help to students with disabilities. Such settings are at the disposal of all students. Additionally, all institutions run an International Office or similar department which local and international students may turn to for advice. This also includes professional support in applying for funding and mobility grants.

### Experts' Appraisal

The experts conclude that all four member universities of the consortium offer excellent student support services and possess long experience in responding to the special needs of mobile students. The local coordinators ensure that all students can easily integrate into the life of their host universities and know who to address in case of organizational problems or questions.

**The experts regard the standard as *fulfilled*.**

## **3.7 Resources**

### 3.7.1 Staff

*The staff should be sufficient and adequate (qualifications, professional and international experience) to implement the study programme.*

The self-report of the Arqus consortium includes CVs of all core academic faculty involved in the study programme. At each university, this core is composed of at least five persons, most of whom are full professors or associate professors. The experts got the opportunity to interview faculty members from all participating universities during the online site visit in June 2022.

The faculty members of the consortium are in constant close exchange. An increased physical mobility of the teaching staff is also aimed at for the next funding period of the Arqus Alliance.

Based on the experience gathered during the pandemic of the past two years, all lecturers possess some experience in the realm of online teaching. As already mentioned above, additional training classes are on offer to further increase the didactic competencies of the teaching staff if necessary.

As described in the self-report, all four universities also dispose of experienced administrative staff to support the students and faculty. Apart from the programme coordinators, this may be both staff at central level (as e.g. the International Office) or at the level of the individual departments and institutes involved. Just like the academic faculty, the programme coordinators are organized in a joint committee to ensure continuous and regular communication.

### 3.7.2 Facilities

*The facilities provided should be sufficient and adequate in view of the intended learning outcomes.*

All four higher education institutions of the consortium are classical research universities with a long history and a wide spectrum of academic disciplines. Accordingly, they provide the necessary infrastructure and facilities for teaching a relatively large number of students both online and offline, including extensive library resources, e-learning platforms, lecture halls and seminar rooms as well as technical equipment. The partners have provided extensive written information about their local teaching and learning environments as part of the self-report.

As far as technical resources and media are concerned, the global pandemic of the past two years has initiated a very quick progress and change at the universities. Students at the University of Graz also profit from a high-profile Digital Humanities Center.

All partners of the consortium use the platform Moodle and are planning to further synchronize and connect their accounts in the near future to further facilitate the joint teaching process within the programme.

Although the consortium receives third-party funding through the Arqus Alliance and will take efforts in the future to raise additional resources, all partners have fully committed themselves to guarantee the long-term financial sustainability of the programme out of their own budgets and by involving their own core staff, even if applications for additional funding should not be successful. This was also stressed by the programme coordinators during the online talks.

### Experts' Appraisal

The experts have found that the joint Master's programme in European Studies benefits from excellent human resources, both in the academic and the administrative realm.

The core teaching faculty consists of internationally experienced and highly qualified researchers whose personal profiles and focus areas complement each other very well in the context of the programme. It became very clear during the online talks that the partners have known each other for a long time and have built up close cooperative relationships based on mutual trust.

The same applies to the administrative staff at all partner universities. All partners can rely on long-term experience with managing international study programmes and tending to the needs

of mobile students. According to the programme coordinators, there is no additional staff required for the purposes of the programme. The regular exchange between the programme coordinators contributes to a smooth management and organization across the consortium.

Based on the self-report and the online interviews, the experts are also convinced that all partners provide the necessary infrastructure, facilities and equipment that students need to achieve the intended learning outcomes of the programme. This includes the electronic resources required to put the blended learning approach of the programme into practice. As far as the experts can see, the financial resources of the programme are sufficient and ensure sustainability and stability for the next years to come.

**The experts regard the standard as *fulfilled*.**

### 3.8 Transparency and Documentation

*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.*

A website for the study programme has already been set up, even though it is still under construction and hence not yet accessible by the general public. The experts were provided with an insight into the provisional website in the context of the assessment procedure.

The website is to include extensive information (in English) on the intended learning outcomes, the admission procedure and the contents of the programme. The course catalogue and the applying assessment regulations will also be published there. All local regulations for student examination and assessment have been translated into English.

Practical information on all study places is contained in student guides published by the four universities (cf. Annex 10 to the self-report). The local programme coordinators can provide additional advice by request.

#### Experts' Appraisal

The experts conclude that the Arqus consortium has taken all necessary measures to create full transparency regarding the programme, both for the international student body and the general public.

The programme-related study regulations ("Studienordnung") of the University of Leipzig are included in the self-report, but only in the German original version. The consortium should initiate the translation of the document before the enrolment of the first cohort, if this has not already happened in the meantime.

The experts also recommend drawing out a few core features more prominently in the descriptions of the programme. It should be highlighted, for instance, that physical student mobility is not compulsory, but may be fully replaced by online mobility. As already mentioned in the chapters above, the research-oriented profile of the programme, as well as its regional

and disciplinary focus, should also be clearly outlined in the descriptions and/or the programme title.

### **3.9 Quality Assurance**

*The cooperating institutions should apply joint internal quality assurance processes in accordance with part one of the ESG.*

The members of the programme consortium are planning to apply a combination of local and joint quality assurance procedures.

All four universities conduct regular course evaluation, mostly via online tools. The results of these surveys flow into the internal quality assurance cycles of the universities as described in the self-report.

In addition to that, the consortium will conduct a regular online survey that covers the programme in its entirety. This survey will be coordinated and executed by the University of Leipzig and has been well-tried already in another joint programme that this university coordinates. The survey focuses on three main pillars: the curriculum, the study conditions and learning environment and aspects of internationality.

The outcomes of the survey will be put at the disposal of the Arqus Consortium and discussed at the consortium meetings as well as during regular summer or winter schools. In the context of such joint events, students will also have the opportunity to discuss quality assurance issues directly with their lecturers and programme coordinators.

Graduate surveys are also planned for the future, modeled on established approaches of the coordinating University of Leipzig.

In addition, annually the Arqus Consortium will request quality reports from the participating universities, which will contain:

- The number and quality of received applications and the results of the admission;
- The description of teaching content and its relation to the joint teaching objectives;
- The quality assessment of conducted courses and academic and non-academic supervision as well as measures for improvement;
- The presentation and evaluation of student performance and examination results; and
- The statements by the student representatives.

#### Experts' Appraisal

The experts have come to the conclusion that the consortium has designed a functional quality assurance concept for the programme that takes the special programme profile and the contributions of all partners into account. Both the level of the individual courses/modules and

the programme level are taken into consideration. The consortium can build on long-term experience with the quality assurance of joint programmes, which is at hand especially at the University of Leipzig. Besides surveys for evaluation, relevant data on student success and student performance is also collected for the purpose of quality assurance.

In spite of these positive impressions, the experts still see room for optimization, particularly with regard to the joint quality assurance procedures at consortium level. These should be further developed in the future, in the sense that they should be a bit more systematized and formalized. To the experts' knowledge, it is nowhere clearly stipulated who exactly will receive and discuss the outcomes of the student and graduate surveys, as well as the annual quality reports – and, even more importantly, who will be responsible for taking measures for improvement in response. Judging from the information provided, the experts assume that this will lie in the hands of the Steering Committee, but this should be clearly formulated in an internal guideline or process description.

As regards the involvement of students, the consortium should not rely too strongly on standardized written surveys, but should introduce even more dialogue-oriented formats, as e.g. regular meetings with students to receive direct and immediate feedback on the quality of the courses. The consortium might also consider increasing the number of student representatives in the Steering Committee, involving at least one student from each university.

## **III. Appendix**

### **1. Response of the Consortium to the Expert Report**

For the accreditation of the Arqus Joint Master's Programme "European Studies" which is under design and will start in Fall 2023, the consortium of the joint study programme is highly delighted about the experts' evaluation during the on-site assessment and the subsequent assessment report. The consortium appreciates the recommendations of the expert panel which will support and assist to implement and run the joint study programme successfully. The consortium will consider several measures for further development of the programme according to the recommendations of the expert panel. In the following the consortium wants to take the opportunity to clarify and comment on some of the experts' assessments:

#### II. Assessment Report of the Expert Panel

#### *3. Quality Assessment of the Study Programme*

#### *3.2 Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs)*

Among the recommendations, the committee formulates: "The programme's disciplinary focus and its emphasis on Central and Eastern Europe should be more strongly highlighted in the ILOs." (p. I-5)

This gives the impression, as if our programme would neglect European regions other than the Central and Eastern European ones, while our argument for the renewal of European Studies is exactly the opposite: We understand European studies as something going beyond the European Union. We therefore have a certain focus on regions beyond that geographical understanding, in line also with the expertise and the research profiles of the cooperating institutions, but we do not want to be reduced to a programme on Central and Eastern Europe.

Furthermore, bringing in this regional perspective does not mean that we are neglecting European Union perspectives and in particular Southern/Mediterranean perspectives, through a) the introductory classes in each module and b) the expertise of the University of Granada. We depart from an understanding where all regions are equally covered by the programme and that is also the reason why one of our partners is located in Spain and why many scholars active in the programme teach (also) on Western Europe (as explained during the interview).

It is evidently only a nuance but for the communication of the particular character of this programme it is important that we are not reduced to a programme on Central and Eastern Europe since there exist already such programmes.

If we would be allowed to suggest a reformulation for the recommendation, it would read like: "The programme's disciplinary focus and its emphasis on the various regions of geographical Europe should be more strongly highlighted in the ILOs and in the programme's overall description."

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As recommended by the experts, the academic, regional and disciplinary focus will be described and presented in a more detailed way within the programme description, programme website and further promotional publications. Furthermore, we will include the complete list of ILOs in the Diploma Supplement. Regarding the integration of possible career paths after graduation of the programme in the Diploma Supplement we will refer to possible main career paths. As we have pointed out, the programme offers a wide range of thematic foci, disciplinary approaches and regional emphasis. Thus, within this variety graduates will have the opportunity to create their specialization in order to access possible professional career paths. The combination of specialization, internship and master thesis will indicate a particular professional path within a diverse field of professions (as mentioned before, the labor market for graduates of European Studies is highly diverse and specialized).

We appreciate the consideration of the experts that the research focus of the programme could also be indicated in the title of the programme to help to clarify and to make the research focus more transparent. The suggested title "Joint Research Master's Programme in European Studies" was discussed among the partners which agreed not to introduce the suggested title by the expert panels. We agreed on the fact that Master Programmes at all partner universities are composed by a research profile and hence to include it into the official title would be redundant. Furthermore, it would appear as a distinction to other Master Programmes at the partner universities which is not evident since Master Programmes are self-evidently research focused. But generally, we take the recommendation seriously and we will make it highly transparent that our Master Programme is mainly a research programme.

Additionally, we share the appraisal that in our transnational joint programme all relevant study and assessment regulations should be made available to students in English translation. As soon as the documents will get the final approval by the competent body at all partner institutions they will be translated and published on the website of the programme. Before the enrolment of the first cohort all the relevant documents regarding both study and examination will be available in English.

### *3.3 Study Programme/ Curriculum*

The interdisciplinary approach will not exclude disciplines or appoint certain disciplines more prominent compared to others. On the contrary, the study programme is designed to approach topics from numerous disciplines according to the incorporated expertise of the involved academics in the programme. The thematic focus of the particular modules also includes numerous approaches from Peace and Security Studies as well as from Economics and Development Studies. For instance, M4 on European Foreign Policies during the 2nd term includes approaches from Peace and Security Studies intensively and M7 is mainly dedicated to Europe and Development and Developmental Policies (also from an economic perspective) while M8 and its thematic focus on global challenges and European answers during the 3rd term will include approaches and debates from Peace and Security Studies and Economics. Indeed, to avoid the impression of an imbalanced thematic focus and a narrowed disciplinary approach, we will be aware to communicate it intensively and make it more transparent for



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*1 Response of the Consortium to the Expert Report*

potential candidates. Additionally, since the curriculum will be revised regularly by the consortium, re-balancing with regard to thematic foci and integration of different disciplines will be considered as a matter of course.

We highly appreciate the suggestions to impart courses which are paying more attention to professional skills. During the next years of running the programme we will consider special offers in different contexts such as additional workshops, courses and summer schools, where practitioners or specialized lectures will be integrated. For this purpose, we will consider all opportunities within the consortium and the Arqus Alliance, as well as already existing partnerships, with gatekeepers outside of the universities. In this context, learning a second foreign language (apart from English) is an integral part of the study programme. While studying in a second university, which will certainly be strongly encouraged, competences of a second foreign language will not only be received by everyday life abroad but also accompanied by additional optional language courses, language tandems and similar additional offers to learn a second foreign language.

Furthermore, to get inside perspectives of a future labour market and to make experiences within particular fields of future professional commitments, students will be intensively encouraged and advised to do an internship during their studies in this programme.

### *3.4 Admission and Recognition*

As the experts recommended to raise the language requirements from a minimum level from B2 to C1 (according to the CEFR) we want to take the occasion to underline the selection procedure for admission into the programme. According to the agreement of the consortium, the selection procedure focuses on linguistic competencies during interviews with the candidates as the main step within the selection procedure. During the interviews, the selection committee will have the opportunity to verify and to evaluate the level of language competency and thus to make sure that all students will be able to fully master the requirements of the study programme. This procedure will not only allow to have a close view on language competencies of the respective candidates but is much more sustainable, as it will not exclude candidates with a high academic potential and motivation who had no possibility to prove their language competencies according to CEFR. We are convinced that a B2 minimum of language requirements will guarantee a high diversity and attraction among potentially promising candidates across Europe and beyond who have no opportunity to prove their language competencies on a C1 level. Indeed, to avoid any disparities with regard to language capacities and requirements to study the programme appropriately, we will closely monitor the procedure of selection and admission in order to adjust the level of language requirements accordingly.

In agreement with the remark of the experts in the report, the consortium has agreed to adopt "Joint Guidelines of Regulations for the recognition of prior learning". This document has been jointly developed by the Consortiums' universities as part of the Study Programme Concept and will be accordingly published on the website.

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### *3.9 Quality Assurance*

With regard to the joint quality assurance procedures at the consortium level, we will take the recommendation of the expert panel into consideration during the following years while running the programme. The consortium agreed to systematize and formalize the joint quality assurance procedures in the sense that a committee or working group will be created which will develop an internal guideline, will be responsible to provide formats where evaluation results will be discussed, will create measures for improvement, will create an annual quality report and will develop evaluation tools beyond the standardized written surveys. In line with the recommendations of the expert panel, the consortium will additionally consider increasing the number of student representatives in the Steering Committee (one student from each university).