EFMD Programme Accreditation System

The EFMD Accreditation for international degree programmes in business and management

EPAS STANDARDS AND CRITERIA

EFMD PROGRAMME ACCREDITATION SYSTEM

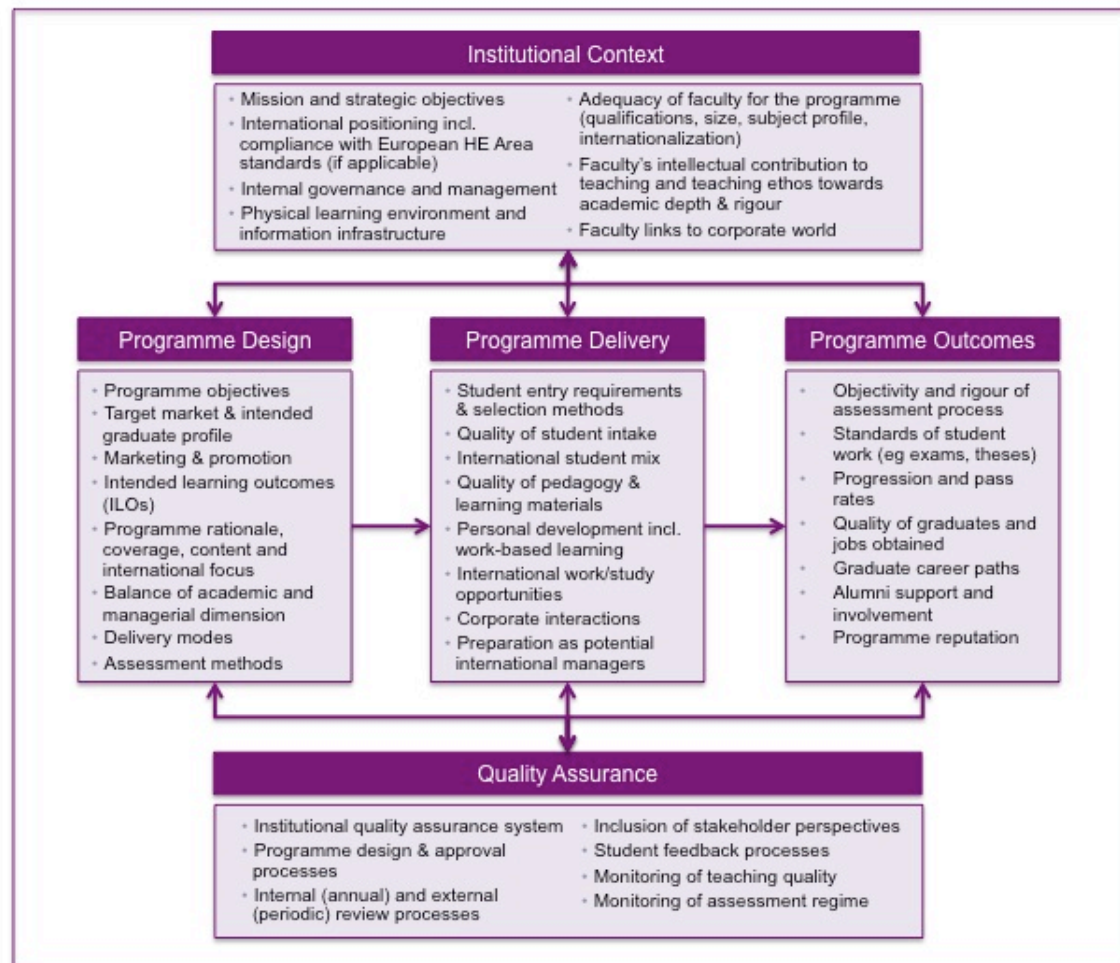# EPAS STANDARDS & CRITERIA

Document Version January 2012[1]

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[1] The EPAS documents are revised periodically and it is the responsibility of the School to always use the latest version of the documents. Older versions of the EPAS document set are only acceptable by prior approval from the EPAS Office. The periodical changes to the documents are always published on the EFMD website in January of each year.

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Introduction

The EFMD Programme Accreditation System (EPAS) is concerned with assessing whether a programme (or suite of programmes) meets a level of quality at international levels in order to justify the granting of the EFMD Programme Accreditation. The standards and criteria for accreditation are based on a model for design, delivery and outcomes achieved within an environmental context and supported by appropriate quality assurance processes.

Institutional Context

- Mission and strategic objectives
- International positioning incl. compliance with European HE Area standards (if applicable)
- Internal governance and management
- Physical learning environment and information infrastructure
- Adequacy of faculty for the programme (qualifications, size, subject profile, internationalization)
- Faculty's intellectual contribution to teaching and teaching ethos towards academic depth & rigour
- Faculty links to corporate world

Programme Design

- Programme objectives
- Target market & intended graduate profile
- Marketing & promotion
- Intended learning outcomes (ILOs)
- Programme rationale, coverage, content and international focus
- Balance of academic and managerial dimension
- Delivery modes
- Assessment methods

Programme Delivery

- Student entry requirements & selection methods
- Quality of student intake
- International student mix
- Quality of pedagogy & learning materials
- Personal development incl. work-based learning
- International work/study opportunities
- Corporate interactions
- Preparation as potential international managers

Programme Outcomes

- Objectivity and rigour of assessment process
- Standards of student work (eg exams, theses)
- Progression and pass rates
- Quality of graduates and jobs obtained
- Graduate career paths
- Alumni support and involvement
- Programme reputation

Quality Assurance

- Institutional quality assurance system
- Programme design & approval processes
- Internal (annual) and external (periodic) review processes
- Inclusion of stakeholder perspectives
- Student feedback processes
- Monitoring of teaching quality
- Monitoring of assessment regime

PROGRAMME ACCREDITATION MODEL

Programme Accreditation Standards and Criteria

Standards are stated for each broad area and these are further explained by the criteria. The criteria are generally given in the form of questions without setting quantitative norms since they are generalizable to all levels and types of programmes. However, the degree of emphasis on the questions and the types of answers will vary for different types of programmes. It is expected that the appropriate EQUAL Guidelines will be respected for the designation of degree titles. Interpretation of these Standards and Criteria and the Guidelines for different programmes lies with the Peer Review Teams and ultimately with the EPAS Accreditation Board which aims to ensure consistency.

This document should be used by institutions as the basis for their Self-Assessment Report (SAR) **which should follow the sequence of this document and the Quality Profile (see EPAS Manual)**. It is also the basis for discussions with the Peer Review Team and their subsequent report and for their recommendations. Specific data requirements are listed either to be included in the SAR (as appendices) or in the Base Room as exhibits and both should be referenced in the SAR text. Lists of what should be included in the SAR and what should be available in the Base Room as exhibits are given in Annexes 5 and 6 of the EPAS Process Manual.

Programmes to be accredited

Please specify on the front cover of the Self-Assessment Report which programmes are to be assessed by EPAS. The programmes must aim to produce graduates in the field of business and management. These may cover a diversity of Programme types or levels such as:

    A. Bachelors or Licence (3 or 4 years)
    B. Masters (1 or 2 years, often Bologna style)
        a. Generalist eg MSc in Management
        b. Specialist eg MSc in Marketing or Finance
    C. Masters pre-Bologna (5 or more years) – eg French Grande Ecole ESC programme
    D. MBA (post-experience)
    E. Doctorate – eg PhD or DBA (see EPAS Process Manual Annex 11)

Eligibility for EPAS requires that a programme has had at least 3 graduating classes (normally over at least 3 years) and has produced at least 60 graduates (see EPAS Process Manual). However, a programme that has developed from one format to another will also be eligible provided that in total the 3-year graduations rule applies. This would typically be the case of a change from a Type C pre-Bologna Masters to a post-Bologna Type A Bachelors plus Type B Masters. Additionally, the institution offering the programme should be of higher education status or level, rather than vocational. It must have been in existence for at least 5 years.

Chapter 1: The Institution in its National and International Context

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1.1 The institutional context

Standard: The institution should be able to demonstrate that it understands how both the national context and the international contexts (including the European HE Area and the Bologna reforms where appropriate) may impact on its portfolio of programme offerings and its market positioning.

The institution should be legitimate in its national context, financially viable and be well resourced and managed such that it is able to offer the programmes on a sustainable basis. It should be able to demonstrate that it has a clear commitment to international and corporate activities and that it is able to project itself credibly in its national and international contexts.

a) The environmental context

- Explain the national HE system and its associated legal and regulatory framework.
- How does the national and international context impact on the positioning and strategy of the institution?
- How does this context affect its ability to offer and deliver particular programmes?
- How does the development of the European Higher Education Area and its associated Bologna Agreement on the harmonisation of qualification structures impact on the institution's mission and programmes?
- How have the Bologna proposals impacted on the design of the programmes being accredited? Are these programmes compatible with other European systems? Are there credit transfer arrangements with other institutions?
- How does the institution ensure compatibility of its programmes with other international systems?

b) The institution

- What body holds the authority for degree awarding powers (eg the State, the parent University, an accreditation agency or other stakeholder body or the institution itself) and how are particular degree programmes authorised?
- What are the institution's mission and strategic objectives?
- Is the institution resourced, organised and managed in such a way as to facilitate the achievement of its objectives?
- What is the evidence for the established reputation and positioning of the institution at national and international levels?

- How does competition with other institutions impact on the institution's programmes?
- To what extent is internationalisation an integral part of programme design and delivery?
- To what extent is the corporate world involved in programme design and delivery?

Data requirements:

Base room   Strategic plan
Financial statements – previous 3 years' accounts and next year's budget
Relevant institution brochures

1.2   Resources and facilities

Standard: The institution's infrastructure should be of such quality as to support the programmes.

- Are the pedagogic facilities appropriate to the level of the programme?
- Are the social and welfare facilities appropriate to the student mix?
- Are the IT systems, library and other resources appropriate?
- Is a learning platform (eg Blackboard, Moodle) available and is it widely used by faculty for interactive learning (in addition to using it for the logistics of course management, eg electronic submission of assignments)?

Data requirements:

SAR   Brief description of IT resources and of other facilities (appendix)

1.3   Faculty

Standard: The faculty* should be of sufficient quality and size to meet the needs of delivering the programmes under review. The institution should demonstrate that the faculty have sufficient expertise and are sufficiently research active for the level of programme and that they are also engaged in pedagogic innovation and development. They should have appropriate links to the international and corporate communities. There should be appropriate faculty management processes.

[*Faculty may be interpreted as core (ie mainly employed by this institution), adjunct or professional, or visiting faculty. Whatever the mix for a particular programme, the faculty body must be integrated into the programme team.]

The expectations on faculty quality should match the level of programme(s) under review. As a minimum, all faculty teaching on any programme should

be expected to have a Masters degree or equivalent and to be sufficiently scholarly in their subject area as well able to blend theory and practice. For teaching on the first two years of a general Bachelors programme in Business & Management, that minimum level may be sufficient. However, as the level of specialisation increases, eg 3rd year electives or MBA electives, the levels of qualifications and scholarly activity should also increase to match the programme level. For a taught specialist Masters programme, eg Masters in Finance or in Marketing, almost all faculty should hold a relevant doctorate and be active in research publishing. At MBA level, the qualifications and research activity requirements are more debatable since it is also important that faculty can show the relevance to post-experience participants of their teaching input both of theory and practice. Finally at doctoral level, it is essential that the faculty involved are recognised as experts in their area.

Some programmes may be delivered primarily by visiting or virtual faculty which is acceptable in the EPAS system. However, the PRT should be convinced that the programme design and delivery are coherent, that the visiting faculty have input to programme design and review, and that the students are able to receive appropriate support throughout the programme and not just on visit days.

- Do the faculty qualifications, size and subject profile match the demands of the programme?
- Do the faculty undertake sufficient scholarly activity (eg research, case writing and/or consultancy) to underpin the academic development of the programme and its students?
- Do the faculty have a teaching ethos that requires students to read further academic literature around the topics being taught (in addition to the faculty's own teaching notes) and do they expect students to make reference to academic literature in the assessment process? Does this lead to appropriate academic depth and rigour in the programme?
- Are the faculty engaged in teaching developments and especially do they make use of technologies as appropriate within the teaching process? How innovative is the pedagogy in general?
- Do they have the background and ability to bring an international dimension to the programme?
- Are the faculty sufficiently well connected to the world of business and management to facilitate the development of students as potential business people and managers?
- What are the faculty management processes including recruitment, workload allocation, performance appraisal and professional development?

Data requirements:

SAR   Distribution of faculty staff numbers by grade/category, age, gender, qualifications/doctorates, degree of research activity, international background, corporate interactions

Base room   Faculty list by subject area with CVs/resumes

Chapter 2:   Programme Design

2.1   Programme objectives and target markets

Standard: The programme objectives should be aligned with the overall strategy of the institution and the needs of its stakeholders. The target market should be appropriate to the strategy and the programme team should be explicit about the student profile to be recruited and the graduate profile to be developed. Marketing and promotion of the programme should be of professionally high quality.

a)   Programme objectives

- What are the programme objectives?
- How do these link with the institutional objectives?
- How will these meet the anticipated needs of the programme's stakeholders and how do they fit the national and international context?

b)   Target market and target graduate profile

- What is the student or participant target market, eg entry level, geographic and international mix?
- How is the programme promoted in these markets? How integral is this promotion to the institution's overall promotion activities?
- For what roles on graduation is the programme preparing students?
- What are likely to be the types of end user organisations and what are likely to be their expectations of the graduates?
- What are expected to be the key attributes of the students on graduation?

Data requirements:

SAR   Web site address for programme publicity

Base room   Programme brochure

2.2   Curriculum design

Standard: The Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs) should be explicit and show how the programme objectives will be achieved. [The ILOs are defined as: What should the students know and be able to do by the end of the programme?] The programme management team should have a clear rationale for the curriculum design and should demonstrate how the curriculum design achieves the ILOs and how it incorporates international and corporate aspects as well as awareness of the broader trends in society.

a) Intended learning outcomes

- What are the intended learning outcomes of the programme in terms of
    - Knowledge
    - Skills including interpersonal skills
    - Attitudes
    - Understanding of the business world
    - International perspective
    - Awareness of the broader trends in society (eg global responsibility)

b) Programme coverage and content

- Describe and explain the rationale for the broad curriculum structure for the programme:
    - Why does the curriculum consist of the particular list of courses and how do they link together in order to achieve the programme objectives and ILOs?
    - Where these exist explain how specialist options/majors depend on and relate to the core courses.

- Describe in more detail:
    - Sequence of courses and progression to more advanced courses, including specialist options/majors (where appropriate)
    - Expected teaching and learning commitments (ie hours in and out of class)
    - Broad teaching aims (eg fostering enthusiasm for the subject) and methods
    - Broad assessment aims and methods

- List the component modules or courses and make available module information such as:
    - Module description
    - Intended learning outcomes
    - Module syllabus or content
    - Pedagogic methods
    - Assessment objectives and methods

c) Academic depth and rigour

- Does the design incorporate an appropriate level of depth and rigour relative to the qualification being awarded?
- Does the design draw on current published research in the field of study?
- Does the design promote an appropriate blend of theory with business practice?
- Is there an appropriate balance between intellectual development and the development of managerial skills?

d)   Other curriculum design aspects

- Are the guidelines of external bodies (such as statutory and professional bodies and relevant subject associations) taken into account in the design, eg EQUAL Guidelines for MBA and other programmes?
- To what extent is the design up-to-date and/or innovative?
- To what extent are the needs of the corporate world embedded in the design?
- How are the broader trends in society (eg CSR, sustainability) incorporated into the design?
- How explicit is the international focus of the programme design in terms of:
  - Curriculum design
  - Course and module content
  - Development of intercultural skills
  - Availability of study or work abroad programmes.
  - Development of knowledge of language(s) other than native tongue

Data requirements:

SAR   The overall programme rationale, ILOs, structure and design should be brief but explicit

Base room   Formal documentation on programme specification and module descriptions as listed in 2.2 b.

2.3   Design of delivery modes and assessment methods

Standard: The methods of programme delivery should match the needs of the target market but also be designed to achieve the programme objectives and ILOs. The assessment regime should be designed so as to test the achievement of the ILOs by students with sufficient rigour and integrity.

a)   Delivery modes

- Define the delivery modes which may include
  - Full time study
  - Part time or modular
  - Distance, online, open or blended learning
  - Work based learning, etc.
- How do these meet the needs of the defined target markets and the programme objectives?
- How do the delivery modes operate (eg PT schedule)?
- Explain the structure and balance between in class teaching hours and out of class learning hours (eg do the total hours of student work meet the requirements of the ECTS system, if applicable)?

- How are the programmes managed (eg separate programme managers for each year group)?
- Are the management and administrative structures, processes and non-academic staff assigned to the programme appropriate?
- Are the student handbooks and guidance notes of appropriate standard?

b)   Assessment methods

- Are the assessment methods designed to ensure that participants meet the agreed objectives and learning outcomes for the programme(s)?
- Does the assessment regime explicitly identify the criteria for assessment and the range and relative weighting of the various assessment methodologies employed? Are these methods objective?
- Is there an appropriate range of assessment methods, eg individual examinations, course work, group assignments, projects or dissertations?
- Is there sufficient individual assessment in each course, eg more than 50%?
- Are there guidelines on the objective assessment of class participation?
- What provision is made for re-taking failed assessments or examinations? Is this appropriate and does it support the programme's aims and objectives?
- Is there a code of ethics (eg dealing with plagiarism)?
- Is there an appeals system?

Data requirements:

Base room   Programme schedule for each year of study
*   Assessment regulations*

Chapter 3:   Programme Delivery & Operations

3.1   Student recruitment

Standard: The entry requirements for the programme should be appropriate for the target market but also be sufficiently rigorous so that the students can expect to achieve the programme objectives and to match the target graduate profile. The selection processes should be explicit and be applied consistently. The institution should present potential students with a customer focus which should include appropriate induction processes.

- What are the entry requirements for the programme in terms of academic and/or vocational qualifications and work experience (if appropriate)?
- What are the processes for handling enquiries, selection and admissions to the programme? Are the stated entry requirements (eg a GMAT score of 550 or more) explicitly used in selection decision making?
- What is the entry profile of the student body in terms of qualifications, age, nationality, and work experience?
- Is there a match between the entry and target profiles? How does the institution evaluate the effectiveness of its recruitment processes?
- What induction processes are in place for the enrolment of new students or participants?

Data requirements:

SAR   Tables of student profiles (updated from Application Datasheet)

Base room   Documentation on induction processes

3.2   Pedagogy

Standard: The institution should provide a high quality educational experience to the students appropriate to the level of the programme. There should be a variety of pedagogic methods and appropriate use of innovation and modern technologies. The learning materials should be of high quality. Furthermore there should be focus on student learning.

- Does the institution employ a sufficiently diverse range of teaching methods and what is the balance between them? How do these support the programme aims?
- To what extent are modern technologies employed, eg interactive learning platforms?
- Explain how faculty are encouraged to use effective teaching methods.

- Does the content of the learning materials cover the content required by the curriculum design and the ILOs?
- How professional are the learning materials in style and production?
- Is additional academic literature made available and what are the expectations for additional reading?
- Is the quality of teaching satisfactory?

Data requirements:

Base room   Samples of learning materials and additional academic readings

3.3   Personal development of students

Standard: The institution and the programme should support the development of students as well rounded and confident individuals and as potential international managers.

- Does the institution provide adequate support to develop learning skills in course participants? How is student counselling organised? What evidence is there that problems are diagnosed at an early stage and remedied where possible?
- Does the programme have general educational aims to develop transferable intellectual skills such as the ability:
  - o to communicate clearly in various media
  - o to argue rationally and draw conclusions based on a rigorous, analytical and critical approach to data
  - o to carry out academic research
  - o to demonstrate an awareness of the wider context of the programme of study
  - o to develop interpersonal and team working skills
  - o to synthesise general concepts and apply them to practical situations
  - o to make a contribution to the community
- How is student progress and development managed on an individual basis? How does this contribute to their overall success?
- Does the programme include sufficient individual project work for the development and assessment of a student's ability to integrate core subjects and to apply managerial skills?
- Are students provided with adequate opportunities to make practical project work as relevant and productive as possible? Are there opportunities for work based learning and/or internships and how many take part?
- What opportunities are provided to allow students to benefit from group work and practical experience? How do these support the programme objectives?

Data requirements:

Base room   Handbooks and guidance notes

3.4   International aspects

Standard: To develop as potential international mangers, students should be exposed to a culture of internationalisation expressed through a mix of students, faculty, teaching materials and international links.

- How is the international focus of the programme developed in terms of:
    - International mix of students
    - International perspectives facilitated by international core and visiting faculty
    - Teaching materials
    - Language development
    - Uptake of study or work abroad programmes
- Show how the mix of international academic partnerships enhances the international culture of the programme.
- What are the links to the international community/business institutions in the context of the programme? How are these selected, established and managed?
- How well prepared are the graduates for careers in international management?
- What proportion of graduates obtain jobs outside the country of the institution?
- What proportion of graduates obtain jobs outside their home country?

Data requirements:

SAR   List of international academic partners and business institutions, and the nature of the partnerships

3.5   Corporate interactions

Standard: The institution should utilise its corporate links in order to enhance the practical relevance of its programme and to facilitate the employability of its graduates.

- What links exist to the corporate or business world? How are these selected and managed?
- How do these corporate links impact on the programme in terms of:
    - Student recruitment and selection
    - Curriculum and module design
    - Teaching, facilitating, mentoring, project supervision
    - Internships, career placement

Data requirements:

SAR   List of corporate links and their nature

Chapter 4: Programme Outcomes

4.1 Assessment output

Standard: The quality of the assessed student work should reflect the intended learning outcomes and the intended graduate profile. Pass rates and progression statistics should be appropriate for the level of programme.

- Are the assessments actually set at an appropriate standard for the level of the programme and have they been properly marked or graded?
- Does the standard of student work, including projects/theses, meet the programme objectives?
- Is the assessment regime applied with sufficient rigour?
- Does the students' work show evidence of academic depth and rigour (appropriate to the degree level), ie understanding of theory underpinning practice?
- Does project work normally require problem solving, data collection and analysis, conclusions and critical thinking (eg understanding of limitations)? (NB Purely descriptive work is unlikely to be adequate)
- What steps are taken to ensure objectivity in terms of the standards being applied?
- How does the institution ensure that the assessments relate to the individual student's own work and ability?
- What are the module pass rates and the overall progression statistics? Do these meet contextual expectations (eg 100% pass rate at Bachelor level unlikely to be acceptable)?
- Where results for the final award or qualification are based on grades, what is the grade profile and does it meet international expectations?

Data requirements:

SAR   Module pass rates and overall progression statistics for the last 3 years

Base room   Samples of exam papers (including resits), course work assignments, etc. and student answers to those assessments plus summary marks for each sample assessment. The PRT should be able to track from the questions set to the answers given by the students to the summary marks schedule. Samples of final projects/theses where applicable.

4.2   Graduate quality and career placement

Standard: The quality of graduates produced should match the target graduate profile and meet international norms for the level of programme. The institution should provide assistance with career placement and the resulting jobs profile should match the programme expectations.

a)   Graduate quality

- Do the graduates appear to have developed the qualities expected from the programme?
- What views do potential employers hold on the programme and are they recruiting from it?

b)   Career placement

- Are the career placements services appropriate to the programme and sufficiently resourced?
- What kind of links are made to potential recruiting organisations?
- Does the actual range of jobs or careers obtained by graduates match the target profile? What kind of organisations employ the graduates and in what functions?
- What is the promotion and salary progression record of graduates?

Data requirements:

SAR   *a) Final graduation statistics for the last 3 years including grade profile where appropriate (eg % merit/distinction or honours grades)*
b) Table of proportions of graduates employed within 3 or 6 months of completing the programme and distribution of starting salaries. Table of sample job functions.

4.3   Alumni

Standard: The institution should offer appropriate support to alumni activities for the mutual benefit of both.

- What alumni services are available to graduates and are these appropriate? What is the take-up or usage of these services?
- Are alumni active in the institution/programme activities and in what way, eg programme promotion, teaching sessions, provision of project work, graduate recruitment, etc.?
- What are the alumni career progression profiles?
- Are the alumni active in fundraising?

Data requirements:

SAR   *Data, where available, on % membership and activity levels of the alumni association and career progression profiles.*

Base room   *Brochures and programmes for alumni activities*

4.4 Programme reputation

- What evidence is there that the programme has high national and/or international standing?
- What evidence is there that graduates are highly sought after by recruiting organisations?

Data requirements:

Base room   *Press rankings and clippings, programme audit reports*

Chapter 5: Quality Assurance Processes

Standard: The institution is expected to operate a formal, effective and rigorous quality assurance system to cover the design and approval of programmes, the monitoring of programme delivery, and undertaking periodic review of all aspects of the programme.

a) Institutional systems

- What formal institutional quality systems are applied to programmes and how do they contribute to the achievement of the institution's strategy?
- How is the degree-awarding function handled by the institution? What mechanisms are used to protect the integrity and validity of the process?
- Have there been any recent audit reports from regulatory agencies or statutory/professional bodies?

b) Programme design/review and approval process

- What organisation structure supports the design/review process?
- How are various faculty perspectives (including virtual faculty) captured in the process?
- How do the student body, alumni and the corporate world influence the design? Is feedback from these stakeholders collected systematically?
- What mechanisms exist for the assessment of consistency with the standards required by external bodies, where appropriate, for the programme content?
- How does the institution assess the successful integration of core subjects and the application of cross-functional approaches to programme design and delivery issues?
- What are the (formal and informal) approval processes and what is the final validation procedure?

c) Periodic programme review

- What is the process for the review and revision of programmes?
- How is an internal review carried out and how often?
- What adjustments to the programme design have been made in the light of feedback from programme teams and key stakeholders?
- Is there a process for periodic fundamental review? Does this involve external input, eg external academics?

d)   Monitoring teaching and assessment

- How is the effectiveness of the teaching evaluated by management? Are peer observations utilised?
- What quality messages come from the student evaluations of individual teaching faculty?
- How is the assessment regime itself evaluated by management, particularly when new or innovative approaches are being applied?
- How is consistency of standards across courses assured, eg is there a system of sample double marking?

Data requirements:

SAR   *Chart showing the QA process sequence. Samples of student evaluation forms. Tables of summary student evaluations of teaching*

Base room   *Audit reports from regulatory agencies or statutory/professional bodies (if any). Documentation on programme approval or validation and periodic review reports. Evidence of monitoring of assessments*

EQUAL Guidelines

The following Guidelines, which can be found in the document entitled Guidelines and Position Papers, may be applicable:

Cat.	Degree type	Guidelines
A	Bachelors	Undergraduate Degrees in General Business & Management
B	Masters (1 / 2 yrs)	Typology of Masters degrees
C	Masters (5 yrs)	First degrees paper **and** Masters Typology
D	MBA	MBA guidelines
E	Doctorates	Doctorate Guidelines/position paper

EQUAL (European Quality Link) is the European association of national business institution associations (www.efmd.org/equal).
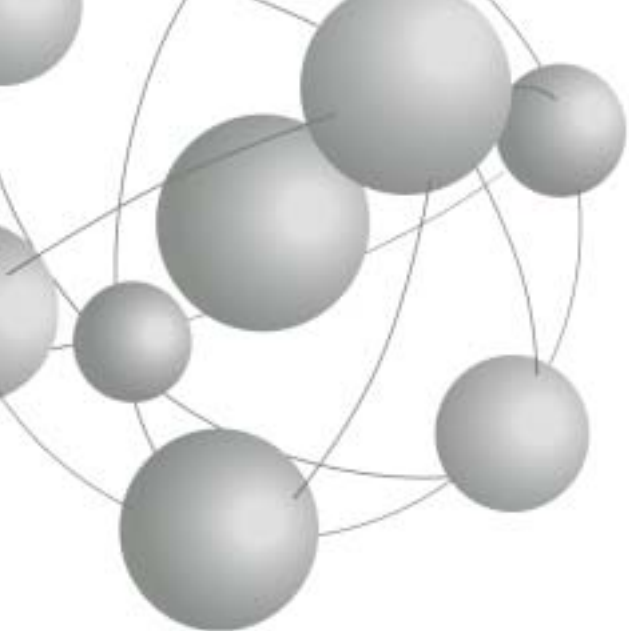
Further Information and Contacts

If you have any questions concerning the EPAS accreditation system, or would like to receive more information, please consult the EFMD website where all documentation is available to download:

http://www.efmd.org/EPAS

Alternatively you can contact the EFMD Quality Services Office:

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