



Asia-Europe Meeting

the ASEM Education Secretariat

**Expert group on ICTM & LOS
Minute
20th November 2018, Cologne**

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MINUTE: Expert group on international Credit Transfer Mechanisms and Learning Outcome Systems – Meeting 20th November 2018, Cologne

Attendees

Frederik Dedecker (Belgium FL), Magalie Soenen (Belgium FL), Yongjun Chen (China - Cdgdc), Fang Bai (China - Cdgdc), Changkong Guan (China - Cdgdc), Axel Leisenberg (France), Alexandra Angress (Germany - DAAD), Nina Knops (Germany - DAAD), Saskia Weißenbach (Germany - DAAD), Alam Nasrah Ikhlas (Indonesia), Inara Dunska (Latvia), Nongnuch Chunbandhit (Thailand), Phicharmon Sujatanond (Thailand), David Urban (AES), Colin Tück (EQAR), Melinda Szabo (EQAR), Dr. Chantavit Sujatanond (SEAMEO-RIHED).

Philippe Lalle (France), Caroline Hollela (Belgium WL), Marilena-Aura Din (Romania), Cloud Bai Yun (UK) and Nadia Rynders asked to be apologised for not being able to attend this meeting.

Introduction

Saskia Weißenbach welcomes all attendees and expresses her thanks to the German Federal Ministry of Science and Education for supporting this meeting.

A short presentation of all attendees follows.

The agenda is presented and adopted.

The minute of the previous meeting in Jakarta (1st June 2018) is adopted without modification by the Expert group (EG).

State of play of the working group - work programme 2018 – 19 (towards the new members)

Regarding the TOR, the contact persons are validated or updated. A discussion starts about countries that mentioned their interest of being part of the EG but who didn't attend the previous meetings. The ASEM Education Secretariat (AES) suggests to contact these countries asking whether they would like to take actively part of the EG (Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia, Portugal, Romania, Russia, UK).

Magalie Soenen reminds the work programme for 2018/2019 that has been set up at the meeting in Jakarta (Cf. minute 1st June 2018, p. 4). Since then, the review of the ToR has been accomplished and the revision of the Compendium has already started and will be continued during this meeting.

Furthermore, the link to the online template of the Compendium has been sent out to all ASME countries in August with the request to fill it in by October. The AES received only few responses and a reminder and a word format of the template has been sent out in September. A request to complete the template has also been launched during the SOM1 meeting in Krems, Austria (16th – 17th October). After the meeting, several countries sent back the filled out template.



The glossary has also been piled thanks to SEAMEO.

A peer review of all templates is planned for this meeting and the discussion about the future format of the compendium (e.g. online-version) is on the agenda. Another topic for this EG will be a presentation and discussion on grade conversion between Asian and European countries.

Revision of the 'Compendium on Credit Systems and Learning Outcomes in ASEM partner countries'

David Urban gives a short feedback about the response rate of the templates. There have been two waves of return, one after the first call and a second one after the presentation during SOM1 in Krems. The EG has now received templates from 16 HE systems (15 countries). After a preliminary review, it appears to the AES that the way the templates were filled out, are quite diverse: some countries have been extremely precise and sent extended descriptions of their HE system while others have been very concise. The amount of information is something that should be definitely reviewed by the EG. Another problem has been the internet tool set up by the AES: the google drive worksheet was not accessible for everyone and it seems much easier to disseminate a word format which can be adapted afterwards. For this reason, the AES sent out the word format with the maximum number of characters needed for every section.

In order to have a precise picture of the completed templates and the difficulties that might have appeared, Magalie Soenen suggests to split up the EG and revise the templates with a focus on the content (verifying if each indicator is clear, if something is missing, etc.). After the review, the AES will contact every country and ask for feedback. It should also be recognized that the Compendium is supposed to be updated time by time.

Alexandra Angress states that the compendium is not an end product. The purpose is to have a valid source of reference, but the work shouldn't duplicate the work that have been done by other institutions.

Frederik Dedecker says that the EG should publish the information that already exists in the compendium. That might stimulate other countries to participate.

The working groups start working on the templates.

Peer review of country contributions

After the peer review process, participants are invited to give a short feedback on the revised templates.

Melinda Szabo suggests that the information on templates from EU countries could be unified. It would be easier then to understand some general information (e.g. 3-5-8 system). Ms. Szabo would like to explore the possibility to update information on QA system in the compendium for all European countries and to mention a link to EQAR in each "Bologna country file".

Colin Tück suggests that some sections of the compendium could be completed with information that already exists. For ECTS, a standard text could be set up for instance. Magalie Soenen says that this has been the idea of the Flemish example handed out to the countries. ASEM members were free to copy paste the information into their template. However, Frederik Dedecker reminds that some countries adopted ECTS in a specific way through their national legislation.



Regarding the templates completed by ASEM members, Saskia Weißenbach points out how differently these documents have been completed. The EG should be keep in mind to whom the compendium is addressed and what kind of public is targeted (e.g. students? ministries? HEI? ...).

A general discussion stats on whether the information about the compendium is detailed enough or not. Magalie Soenen reminds that the glossary should help member countries to complete their work.

Frederik Dedecker thinks that the information in the compendium is much more targeted to professionals than to students (HEI, administrations, ministries) and it might be good to have a lot of detailed information. The EG should ask for details if further information is necessary. However, it is also useful to keep sometimes the terminology in the original language (e.g. 'bachelor'). The target group should be mentioned in the introductory text of the compendium.

Colin Tück finds that the information in the templates that he reviewed, was quite good and equalized between different countries. He just had some doubts about the tables who are sometimes in a mismatch to the text. But the idea of a table is in general very good.

For Magalie Soenen, there is a problem with general information when countries refer to previous pages or different sections. It should be possible to read just one part of the compendium without changing to another part.

Axel Leisenberg says that it is sometimes relevant to distinguish "credit mobility" from "degree mobility" when it comes to international student mobility. But it is difficult for many countries to get this information (e.g. ASEAN countries) and for some countries, this information is just not available.

Discussion on the future format and dissemination of the compendium (e.g. online-version)

David Urban presents some examples of online tools on HE data (cf. URL below). The idea is to present tools that are not just representing data, but mapping all kinds of information.

The example of the Education GPS (OECD) represents the idea of a zoom (<http://gpseducation.oecd.org/Home>). Another similar example is displayed at the DAAD website, showing a geographical approach: access to the information is given by spotting a country, then the visitor can follow thematic items (<https://www.daad.de/laenderinformationen/europa/de>).

The "world higher education map" (<https://www.whed.net/home.php>) follows the idea of an interactive map that can be explored by various qualitative categories, like geographical order (continent, country, ...), institutional order (HEI, fields of study, ...). There is also an integrated search engine, but the difficulty is to define key words that are mutually exclusive and jointly exhaustive (e.g. university, master, program(me), degree,).

A sophisticated but clear example on how comparable information can be displayed, categorized in specific country information is available on the website of the EU parliament: (<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/infographics/lifelonglearning/index.html>). In this case,



complex and sophisticated multi-thematic hierarchy (e.g. : tertiary education, financing,) is combined with an integrated glossary.

However, the question on how information will be organized, depends again on the target groups that the EG would like to reach with the Compendium. Some points have to be very clear (e.g. : What kind of data should be illustrated? Should it be holistic without being difficult to manage? What about accessibility and user-friendly aspect? What about regular updates and follow-up (ICT, structures, technical modifications)?, ...)

Melinda Szabo illustrates the EQAR website, particularly the register menu (<https://www.eqar.eu/kb/country-information/country/?id=64>): there is a short information about the HE system ranked by country, then the register (agencies) are connected before it comes to information on HEI. Thus, it depends on what we would like to illustrate.

For Colin Tück, the basic information is quite similar to what we have in ASEM (e.g. possibility in mapping system openness to Cross Border Quality Assurance : <https://www.eqar.eu/kb/cross-border-qa/mapping-system-openness-to-cbqa/>)

For Magalie Soenen and Frederik Dedecker, the main target group would be HEI. For example it would be useful to check information by country on the typical duration of a degree, on their credit system, or some other basic information.

Colin Tück suggests a two dimensional access of information, e.g. a vertical access with a page for the whole country with all information about the country and a horizontal access, where all information about quality assurance across all countries is available. In practice, the user chooses 3 countries and then compare the chosen categories (e.g. : quality assurance).

After discussion, it is said that it should be possible with the compendium to compare different data (vertical and horizontal way), visualize a country by map and to have a good search tool. All terms figuring in the glossary should be automatically highlighted in the text, pointing out definitions that are used with different meanings (e.g.: postgraduate). A search engine referring to the glossary should be also included.

Facilitate grade conversion between Asian and European countries

Frederik Dedecker gives a presentation about grade conversion (cf. attached powerpoint: “Credits and Grades: corner stones for ASEM-Mobility”).

He starts with an update by presenting the SHARE percentage system for mobility which has been published in October 2018 in the SHARE Handbook “[towards a common credit transfer system for intra-ASEAN and ASEAN-EU mobility](#)”. As most countries have regional or national QF in place, comparability of levels are possible (e.g.: QF for the EHEA 8 levels). A lot of HEI and HE legislations are also using LO as basis for the description of their programmes and courses. The idea of the SHARE project is that having levels applicable for HEI (e.g. EU framework or national frameworks), credits or levels can be compared or translated in percentages : a completed QF reflects 100% of programme outcomes for a validated degree. If the student is mobile, there is a certain percentage of that degree that is spent at the home institution and a percentage that is spent at the host institution (e.g. : slide 8 and 9 : if student’s mobility is 15%, then

these 15% can be expressed in comparable CTS in the home institution and the host institution. This system is also explained in the SHARE handbook). To make this idea work, qualification frameworks must be in place and programmes should be described in terms of percentages of learning outcomes.

A discussion starts whether these instruments are realistic in an ASEM context. Dr. Chantavit Sujatanond brings forward the argument that this system would not be applicable for numerous professional degrees, like medicine, nursing, architecture, etc. because countries have professional associations and students are competing within specific courses they have to follow. There have been similar problems in Europe (e.g. nursing programme). To implement the percentage system, the LO's have to be the same and not the course, but if the diploma is based on specific content and not on LO's then it could be a problem indeed. Dr. Chantavit Sujatanond explains why it might be too early to use the SHARE system: South East Asia (SEA) is still learning from EU concerning LO's. In many cases this system is not implemented yet. Even though universities try to adopt LO's, there are still some years to progress. However, the SHARE system has the advantage to go beyond discussions from the past and propose something new while the future lays in LO's. As HEI's are aware about that, they are pushing forward harmonization.

It appears that the workload is still a difficult question for students. Specific problems appear when it comes to comparing a master study of 60 credits with another master study that has a bigger workload (e.g. master of 120 credits) and students have to accept to spend more time in the other country. It seems quite difficult to perform a mobility when cycles are disparate, even if they are at the same level.

Alexandra Angress reminds that LO's are not a homogeneous stock in Europe. Even though working with LO's (Dublin descriptors) is accepted, the problem still remains with traditional assessment in universities: skills are competency based, but the assessment is not formative (it is very often an exam). HEI's in Germany encourage students to go to agents (intermediate bodies) who are very successful and provide practical services. Agents are sometimes very successful in placing our students. The agents are rather active in credit mobility than in degree mobility.

The second part of Frederik Dedeckers' presentation is on grade conversion. Today, even if countries still have different grading scales, mobile students have the right to a fair conversion of the grades they have obtained during a period of study abroad. In order to achieve this right, each HEI should produce a grading table for each degree course within a specific subject area to ensure transparency of the grading culture and the accurate conversion of grades.

These grading tables are based on the number of students that passed a course, representing the distribution of the number of students for each grade. Grading tables should be based on ISCED-code (International Standard Classification of Education) to make it comparable between HEI (e.g.: slide 14 and 15, ISCED-F code 023 Languages). However, in practice, many European HEI's do not use ISCED-codes and are still using the system from before 2008. There is also no consensus on the use of credit system or grade conversion in other parts of the world.

Frederik Dedecker presents the pragmatic five step approach used at the Ghent university since academic year 2018-19, using grade conversion tables and methods from the most preferable step (1st step) to the less desirable step (5th step): 1st step: grade distribution table with ISCED reference group; 2nd step: grade distribution table at the level of the institution / programme / course; 3rd step: grade distribution table at

country level, 4th step: grade distribution table based on the A-B-C-D-E scale and 5th step: no grade distribution, but there is often a communication in advance about the methodology for grade conversion to be used, preferably on the basis of clear agreements with the partner institution. In some cases, there is no possibility to translate grades. In these situation, the proposal is to use “pass/fail” without giving a local grade. As a consequence, these courses do not count to calculate a final grade.

Actually, there is no particular tendency in Asia to discuss grade distribution tables. In Europe, there are some reasons why HEI are not using the grading system. On the one hand, it took a while to implement the old system. On the other hand, the system is simple but an IT system which tracks the grades is needed with a map that tracks all student programmes with ISCED codes. Software for grade conversion exists, but the database is not available in each university. It is the same for ECTS grades that some universities are not integrating because of the lack of data, even though it is part of the ECTS user’s guide. A lot of universities and countries would like to implement the Grade Point Average system instead of ECTS because of the lack of implementation success.

From Nongnuch Chunbandhit experience, universities just wanted to avoid the difficulties so they use the credits, but not the grades at all, so they only adopt the pass and fail system.

As the lack of evaluating grades has a negative impact on student mobility or the choice of student mobility, it is suggested to continue the brainstorm on the issue of grade conversion within the EG.

This part of the meeting has been a kind of kick-off for a discussion and should be brought back to the community. Magalie Soenen is asking how the EG can evolve and what can be done to start a discussion about the topic on grade conversion. It would be too early to present it as a topic for ASEMME7, but awareness about grade conversion could be built up. SEAMEO-RIHED organizes an event in November 2019, which could be an opportunity to raise awareness on that issue in a more concrete way. It could also be a topic for the next ASEM Education Process cycle from ASEMME7 – to ASEMME8. But there could also be another topic presented in the Chairs conclusions’, as the update of the compendium would be regularly every two years.

For the future, the use of credits and LO is still of concern. Good practice examples on LO and/or grade conversion between Europe and Asia could be presented, for instance bilateral good practices on work placement between the University of Duisburg Essen (Germany) and Indonesia.

Forthcoming activities and meetings

The next meeting will take place in an Asian country around spring. It should not be too close to SOM2 / ASEMME7 in Mai 2019. EG meetings should be organized back-to-back with other meetings and events where possible. A suggestion is to meet in Malaysia between 25th and 29th of march 2019 during the apaie conference (<https://www.apaie2019.org/>). A final date will be communicated as soon as possible.

Regarding the next steps for the compendium, the AES will send a written feedback to the countries that already filled out the template and an additional call for participation will be launched to countries that did not participate in the first calls. For SEA countries Dr. Chantavit Sujatanond suggests to be in cc., so she can support and make use of her network to encourage colleagues to participate.



The AES will work further on the creation of a publication template in the form of an interactive website for the compendium. This should be ready to be presented during ASEMME7.

Magalie Soenen thanks everybody for participating on this fruitful meeting.

