

Developing and running of Joint (Degree) Programmes  
in the Erasmus Mundus context  
—  
Ghent University's approach

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SIPUS Joint Degree Workshop  
Novi Sad, 23 March 2015

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# PRESENTATION

## Topics:

- Ghent University
- Joint Programmes in Erasmus Mundus
- Rationale
- Jointness
- Employability and sustainability

→ point of view of an administrator

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# GHENT UNIVERSITY

- Founded in 1817, former state university
  - Comprehensive university, research-based education
    - 61 BA programmes
    - 149 MA programmes
  - *“Ghent University defines itself in a broad international perspective”*
  - Dutch speaking university
    - 40 English-taught MA programmes
    - Large number of additional courses taught in English
  - Total student population 2014-15 is 41,783 (11% is international)
  - Active in EU funding programmes
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## ERASMUS MUNDUS MC/JMD AT GHENT UNIVERSITY (UGENT)

Co-ordinator :

- IMRD –International MSc in Rural Development (2004)
- EMSP – European MSc in Photonics (2005)
- FUSION - European Master in Nuclear Fusion Sc. and Eng. Physics (2005)
- EMBC - International MSc in Marine Biodiversity and Conservation (2007)
- EUMAINE – European MSc in Nematology (2007)
- IMFSE – International MSc in Fire Safety Engineering (2009)
- IMETE – International MSc in Environmental Technology and Engineering (2010)

Partner:

- EMLE - European Master in Law and Economics, coord. Erasmus University Rotterdam (2004)
  - CEMACUBE – International MSc in Biomedical Engineering, coord. RU Groningen (2009)
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## PAST SUCCESS RATE?

- Experience of Ghent University in EU-projects
- Early adopter of Bologna process
- Bottom-up initiative of academics, supported by university administration
- Flemish Ministry of Education promoter of Erasmus Mundus
- 'critical mass' in Erasmus Mundus
- Educational standards of all partners involved

<-> adapt to new context of Erasmus+ : higher demands, new requirements, more competition

- shift in focus from intercultural aspect towards employability
- increased stress on sustainability: funding period reduced in length

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## RATIONALE FOR SETTING UP

Largely grown as bottom-up initiatives

- Deepen existing collaboration
  - Offer a programme which locally cannot be offered in full
  - Increase international visibility
  - Expand international scientific network
  - Recruit potential PhD-students
  - Increased internal visibility for staff involved
  - Funding opportunity
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## IMPACT ON THE INSTITUTION

- Learning from the approach of the consortium partners
  - Growth in number of English-taught courses and programmes
  - Impact on services:
    - Housing
    - Increasing availability of specific language courses
    - Level of services to all international students increased
  - Motor in creation of other joint programmes / double degrees
  - Contribution to change in institutional culture
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## 'Jointness'

- *"EMJMDs [...] Their specificity lies in their high integration / jointness"*
  - Footnote: *"EMJMDs are expected to have set up a jointly designed and fully integrated academic curriculum with common implementation procedures, e.g. joint students application, selection, admission and examination rules, as well as with shared quality assurance mechanisms"*
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## 'Jointness' II

- Originates in the academic design of the programme and corresponding mobility trajectory/ies
  - Students become students of the consortium, not of individual universities - "The whole is more than the mere some of the individual parts"
  - Need for shared awareness of and responsibility toward the aims of the programme, of all staff involved, not only the core members
    - Do the partners share a common history?
  - The jointness is concretized in a well-developed consortium agreement and functional administrative structures supported by the right management tools
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## OUR UNDERSTANDING OF JOINT PROGRAMMES

- Many definitions around
    - Joint degree, joint programme, double degree, dual degree, multiple degree, etc.
    - EACEA: ‘pragmatic’ approach based on certificate(s) awarded
  - Definitions vary according to
    - Aims of the collaboration
    - Type of degree awarded
  - At UGent we use a programme-oriented approach:
    - Double-degree programme:
      - Two separate national programmes work closely together, but each award their own degree
    - Joint Programme
      - A new programme, with jointly defined learning outcomes
      - Regardless of degree-type delivered; however joint degree considered as best rendition
      - Maximum integration → Erasmus Mundus
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## MOBILITY SCHEMES

- Mobility scheme developed on the basis of:
    - Academic design of the programme (complementarity)
    - Mobility requirements of the Erasmus Mundus programme (minimum ECTS)
    - Logistic constraints (housing, services)
  - Beyond this, various models among the programmes:
    - From highly individualised choices in the common offer
    - over programmes with a common base (e.g. SEM 1) and subject-specific orientation in subsequent mobility periods,
    - to fully ‘streamlined’ schemes with students moving together as one cohort from partner to partner → Maximum integration
    - ...
  - Inclusion of moments when all students and key staff meet, regardless of individual trajectories (e.g. Summer Schools, thesis events, online tools, etc.)
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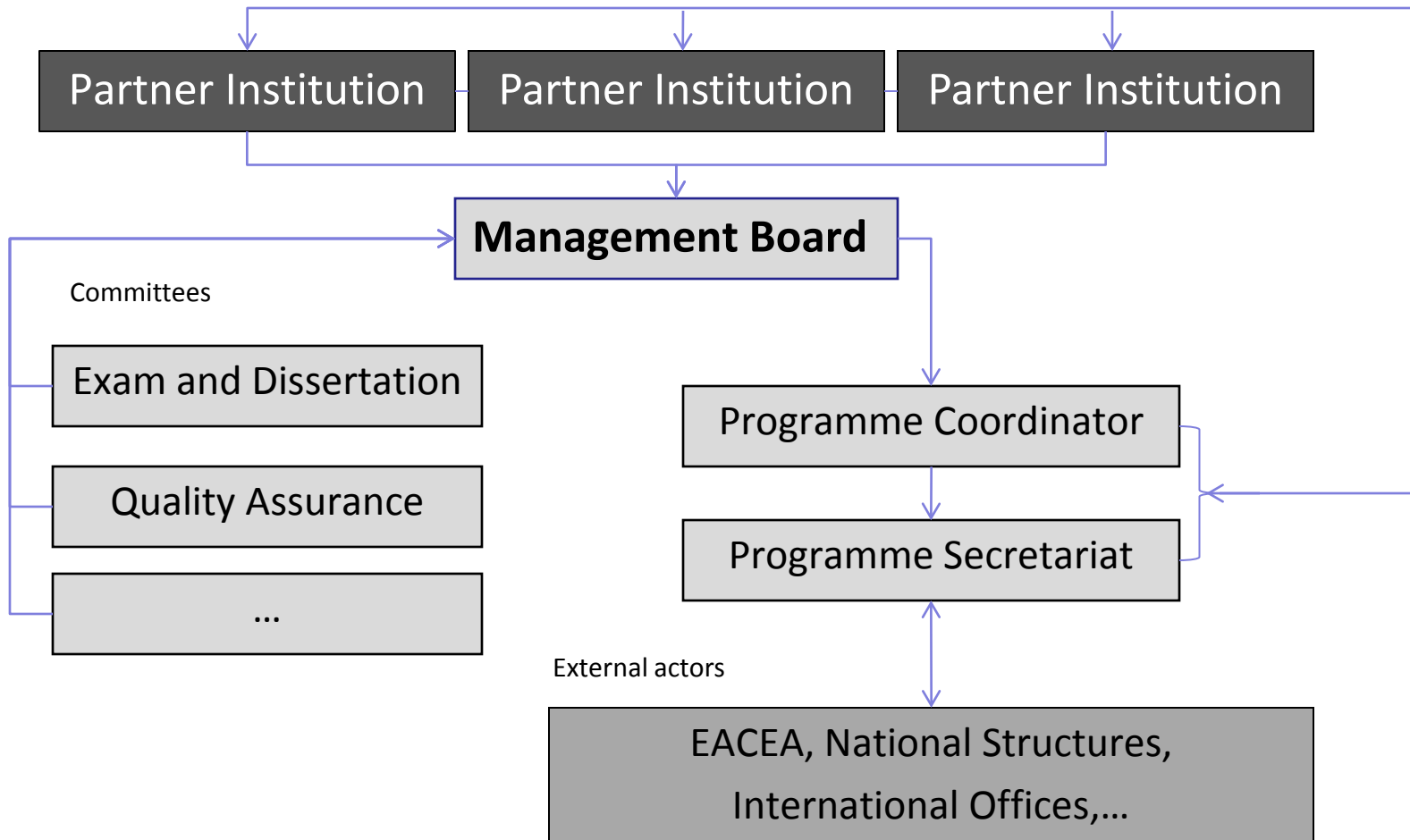
## THE JOINT DEGREE

- If possible, one joint programme comes with one degree title / qualification on one degree certificate (‘programme brand’ ) with one diploma supplement
  - Certificate prepared at Ghent University as the coordinating institution
  - Certificate carries the logos of all participating institutions
  - To be signed by all representatives of the institutions participating in the degree awarding
  - Diploma Supplement details all courses, across the consortium (‘joint diploma supplement’)
  - Recognition
    - Flemish Community: linked to NVAO accreditation
    - Accreditation considers the programme as a whole, including the offer at the partner institutions
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## ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURES

- In general EACEA addresses the project co-ordinator
  - The head of the co-ordinating institution remains responsible as legal representative (i.e. Rector / Vice-Chancellor signs all contracts)
  - The project co-ordinator
    - organises the secretariat for the consortium,
    - presides the Management Board,
    - guarantees the smooth operating of the consortium in general
  - Preferably one full time secretariat coordinator is employed for the day-to-day workings of the consortium, under management of the project co-ordinator
  - Appoint local liaison officers ('champions') closely involved in the programme at all partner universities to assure embedding, both academically and administratively
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## GOVERNANCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURES



## CONSORTIUM AGREEMENT

- Be aware of the possibly long approval process within the respective partner institutions
  - Better strong and comprehensive than rushed
  - To be covered:
    - Structure of the programme, mobility
    - organizational structure and responsibilities (management)
    - Financial arrangement (tuition fee, EC grant, transfers between partners)
    - Admission, Application, Selection procedure and enrolment procedure
    - Examination, transfer of credits
    - Degree delivery
    - Quality assurance
    - Intellectual property rights
    - Practical implementation (details preferably worked out in an Annex)
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## EMPLOYABILITY

- *“EMJMD aim to [...] improve the level of competences and skills of Master graduates, and in particular the relevance of the Joint Masters for the labour market, through an increased involvement of employers”*
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## EMPLOYABILITY II

- Emphasis grew from Erasmus Mundus II calls onwards; strong emphasis in Erasmus+
  - EC's expectation of 'return on investment'
  - Caveat: focus remains on attracting students globally
  - Role of Associated Members
    - Advisory role to the management
    - contributions from the professional field in the courses
    - Internship positions under close academic guidance
  - Follow-up of alumni; Alumni network
  - Not to be forgotten: mobility and international experience makes students more employable, as should the quality and renown of the programme and its degree
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## SUSTAINABILITY

- *“Selected EMJMDs will receive high levels of funding for a period of 4 to 5 years [= 3 cohorts] so as to allow them to [...] reinforce their sustainability prospects”*
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## SUSTAINABILITY II

- Setting up a new course programme: semi-permanent nature
  - European funding is to be considered seed money
    - Funding is now reduced to three cohorts (short!)
  - Many related aspects (promotion, quality, organisation,...) all aiming for:
    - maintaining enrolment figures
    - being cost effective
  - Mostly, but not only a financial matter:
    - Quality: Programme accreditation / Degree recognition
    - Staff in consortium network: leaves, pensions, etc.
    - embedding in local academic and administrative structures
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## SUSTAINABILITY II

- Creation of a reserve fund
  - Investigate possibilities for other external scholarship schemes
  - Input from partner organisations for complementary funding
    - Extra scholarships
    - Joint investment from the partner universities
    - Extra funding for the programme management (eg. university support)
    - Cost-effective organisation (share administrative tasks?)
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## TO CONCLUDE

- Conclusive remarks
    - *No consortium is identical in its operating; each one is unique*
    - *The coordinator and his/her team are crucial in obtaining success: management and communication styles play a vital role*
    - *Partnerships can be based on previous academic collaboration and mutual trust, but formalisation and control mechanisms are necessary*
    - *Mutual understanding between academics and administrators is needed in this complex international educational and administrative undertaking*
    - *Think of the Erasmus Mundus framework as a model, but don't limit yourself to this context*
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