

**Universities Scotland: Teaching Quality Forum**  
**Bologna Workshop: Background Information from Institutions**  
**30 March 2006**

This paper gives a summary of responses made by Scottish higher education institutions with regard to progress in implementation of the European Diploma Supplement (EDS), use of Programme Specifications and involvement with Joint Degrees in a European context. In addition, institutions were asked whether they wished to raise any questions or issues regarding the Bologna process in general.

To date nine institutions responded. These are listed at appendix 1.

### **Implementation of the European Diploma Supplement (EDS)**

Institutions were asked their current progress with respect to implementing and issuing the EDS and how they were using Programme Specifications. They were also asked what challenges and issues they had faced or were facing. Finally, they were asked to consider issues or questions they would like to discuss at the workshop on 30 March 2006

### **Current Progress toward implementing the EDS**

All institutions that responded indicated progress towards producing the EDS, most having formulated interim arrangements although information was being produced in different formats. For example:

- three institutions provided students with the institution's academic transcripts, the Scottish higher education statement and an institutional statement,
- one institution was able to produce a transcript and the Scottish higher education statement;
- two institutions were producing or intended to produce transcripts with links to further programme information on the world wide web;
- one institution stated that they had provided the EDS to all graduating students in November 2005 and another indicated that all students who graduated in 2006 would receive an EDS containing all information currently held on the student record system;
- two institutions indicated that they had models in place to implement the EDS.

However, it was clear that in all cases institutions were either providing transcripts (or alternatives) to students or were near to being able to do this.

With regard to future progress for EDS implementation four institutions reported various activities. These ranged from:

- revising the format of the EDS document to simplify production and also extending it to graduates off campus;
- producing a unified EDS document for graduates from 2006/07;
- implementing a new student record system that should be able to cope with the demands of the EDS (two institutions).

### **Challenges and issues around EDS Implementation**

Several institutions reported challenges around EDS implementation particularly in the areas of incorporating variable course structures to the more rigid EDS format and the resource implications in terms of time and money involved in adapting or developing management information systems.

In addition, the problems of ensuring the information produced in the EDS was correct were raised, in terms of the currency of content, consistency of data entry and ensuring version control. Issues also emerged regarding the resolution of the conflicting needs to ensure on one hand that the programme information in the EDS was correct against the benefits gained by linking existing programme information with EDS systems.

Another issue reported was the cost benefit and usefulness of paper-based Diploma Supplements – would an electronic EDS be a more cost effective option?

### **Use of Programme Specifications**

Five respondents described the use of programme specifications in their institutions. All of these indicated that their work with programme specifications was ongoing with varying amounts of progress, ranging from:

- the advanced stages of the production of a three tiered system bringing together the information needs of potential applicants, employers; enrolled students, academics and external examiners;
- the development of an online system of programme specifications that linked to the University Calendar;
- the development of implementation timetable for the approval of programme specifications and the uploading of approved programme specifications onto a central University website;
- the standardization of programme specifications institution-wide.

One institution reported that their programme specifications were issued with the EDS but however, they felt that the specifications as they stood should be discontinued and something more appropriate produced for the EDS specifically. The institution was keen that discussions around this type of information should be conducted UK-wide.

Two institutions were concerned about how developments in the rest of the UK (particularly around the “Programme Plus” initiative) would impact on programme information, particularly with respect to the need to avoid producing more information that was necessary. A similar concern was also raised about the overlap in content between programme specifications and the UCAS entry profile.

### **Joint Degrees in a European Context**

Institutions were asked whether they offered Joint Degrees and what issues they had faced or were facing. They were asked to consider issues or questions they would like to discuss at the workshop on 30 March 2006.

### **Current Progress**

Of the nine institutions that responded, three institutions stated that they were already operating Joint Degrees under Erasmus Mundus agreements and two

institutions were in the process of developing provision in this area. Four institutions did not at present offer Joint Degrees, but two of this four expressed a desire or detailed ongoing strategy that would lead to them offering Joint Degrees.

## **Challenges and Issues facing institutions**

There was one major set of issues consistently mentioned by institutions that were operating Joint Degrees with European institutions under Erasmus Mundus and those institutions who wished to offer Joint Degrees - these were in the area of quality assurance. Issues mentioned included trying to reconcile differing quality systems between institutions in different countries, for example, institutions in most European countries do not require external examiners and determining ownership of degree standards and quality between partner institutions.

There was acknowledgement that overly bureaucratic quality assurance systems did not facilitate international collaboration. The value of both QAA workshops on Joint Degrees was also mentioned but more information on good practice and information about how to participate in Erasmus Mundus from a quality perspective were requested. Clearly, more consideration and information about operating quality assurance across partnerships of this nature would be welcomed.

Resolving issues such as the definition of the who was the “degree-awarding body” was exercising at least one institution with their overseas partner and issues had also arisen around fees and other administrative matters in another institution.

## **The Bologna Process: General Issues**

Three institutions raised the issue of the status of the Integrated Masters degree in the Bologna Framework, one institution in particular was concerned about the funding implications for the final year of study if the proposal by UUK’s European Unit that those on integrated Masters degrees be awarded both a Bachelors degree and a Masters was adopted.

Other issues that were raised included:

- The position of the three-year European Bachelor degree in relation to the UK Masters degree, in particular whether students from Europe could go straight onto a UK Masters degree or whether appropriate Masters degrees should be developed for this market.
- Whether there was scope to have exit awards from doctoral programmes under the three-cycle model.
- The need to ensure that the SCQF contributed in a robust way to developments in the area of credit and qualification frameworks and that the relationship between national and the various European frameworks was kept as simple as possible.
- The need to ensure that European developments do not dominate other developments in international collaboration.