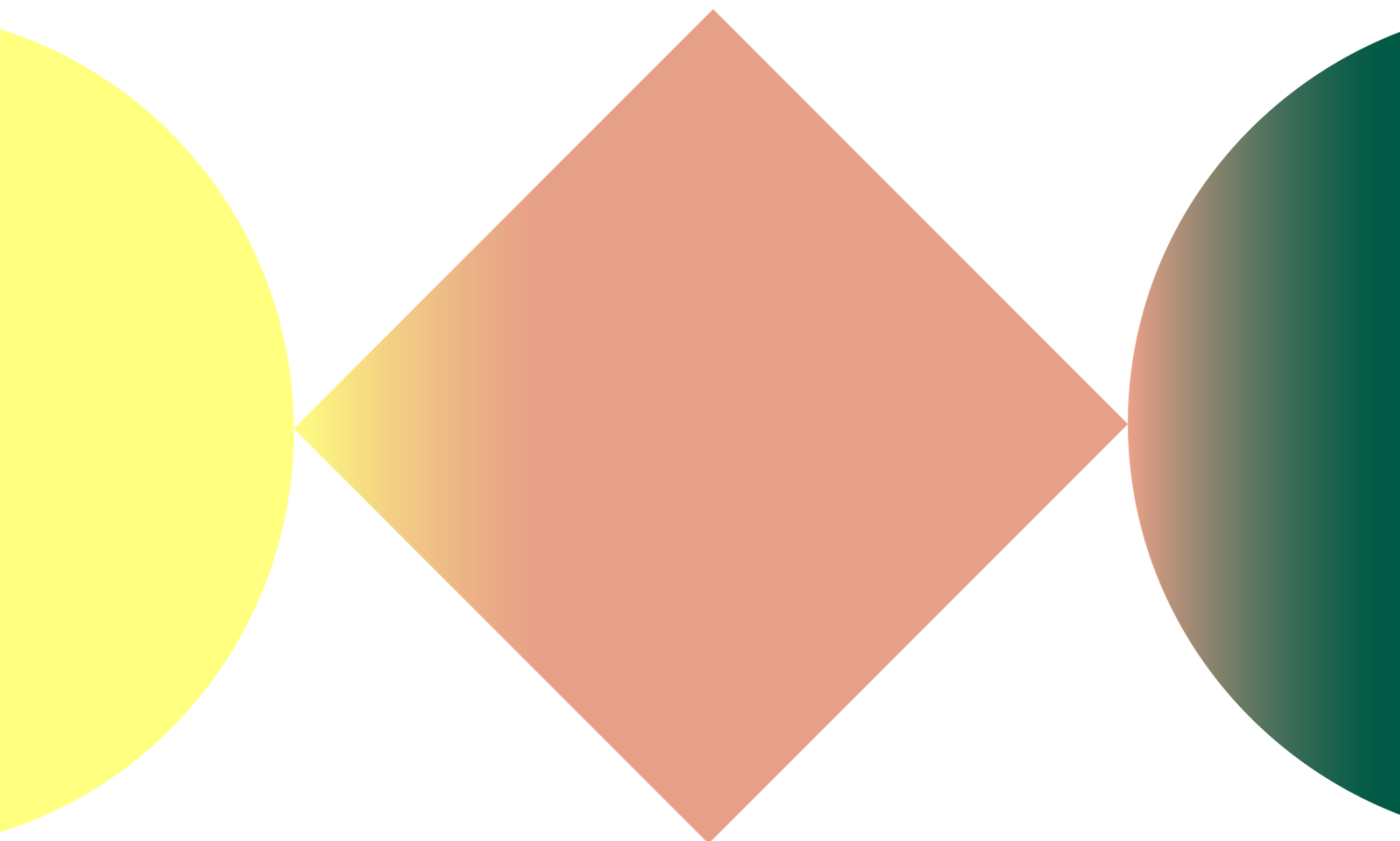


# Format Joint Bachelor



Una Europa format for a joint Bachelor

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If you have any questions or comments relating to this publication, please contact:

**Amandine Duraz**

Lead of 1Europe Work Package 3 – Joint Innovative Formats for Education

Amandine.Duraz@univ-paris1.fr

Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne

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# Content

<b>INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>MAIN CHARACTERISTICS OF A UNA EUROPA JOINT BACHELOR DEGREE .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>OVERCOMING BARRIERS AND CHALLENGES .....</b>	<b>6</b>
1. DEGREE CERTIFICATION.....	7
2. ACCREDITATION AND QUALITY ASSURANCE .....	9
3. MANAGEMENT OF THE DEGREE .....	10
4. FINANCIAL ISSUES .....	11
5. APPLICATION AND ADMISSION.....	12
6. DURATION OF STUDIES .....	13
7. ACADEMIC CALENDARS .....	13
8. INTERDISCIPLINARITY: LEARNING OUTCOMES AND FURTHER STUDIES .....	14
9. DISTRIBUTION OF ECTS IN THE CURRICULUM .....	15
10. MOBILITY.....	16
11. MULTILINGUALISM .....	19
<b>GLOSSARY – CORE COMMON DEFINITIONS.....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>ANNEXES AND USEFUL RESOURCES .....</b>	<b>24</b>

# Introduction

There is a pressing need to equip future generations with the necessary knowledge, skills and competences to tackle global and societal challenges, which require experience across a range of different disciplines. To this end, Una Europa is investing in the development of interdisciplinary Bachelor degrees at European scale in selected Focus Areas, which strongly align with existing global challenges. Una Europa Joint Bachelor degrees equip students with the needed disciplinary, interdisciplinary and transversal skills and prepare them for a future in an international, inter- and multicultural environment. In an increasingly interconnected world, universities are educating the Global Citizens of the Future, which requires like-minded institutions to join forces to provide innovative joint educational offers that go beyond what a single institution can achieve alone.

Joint degrees indeed have a great added-value for both the students and the institutions involved in such programmes. For the students, joint degrees allow them to study in an international environment and to benefit from the expertise of the different institutions involved and the latest state of international research in their field of study. They often offer more mobility options (and the possibility of longer stays abroad) than in a national degree programme, which allow them to increase significantly their language and transversal skills, preparing them efficiently for tackling the global challenges of the future. Thanks to these features, joint degrees are often considered facilitating the access to jobs in an international labour market, thus providing them with an important competitive advantage in their working life. For the institutions, joint degrees have the potential to attract more global talents and contribute to the visibility and international reach of their universities. They reinforce collaborations in research and education and facilitate the emergence of new research projects by connecting the expertise of their different researchers.

Una Europa, as a European University alliance, is strongly committed to developing an inter-university campus, where students are equipped with high-quality transnational education. To that end, Una Europa therefore engaged itself to develop innovative joint educational offers, aiming at strengthening the European higher education area and at empowering future graduates with the knowledge, skills and competences needed to succeed on the international labour market and tackle global challenges.

While the EU-funded Erasmus Mundus scheme supports the establishment of joint Master's degrees in Europe, and has contributed to easing national rules to allow for this type of new degrees, joint Bachelor degrees are still few and far between. Una Europa has thus decided to explore the development of open and joint Bachelor degrees, adapted to the student's own interests and career goals, truly interdisciplinary and based in the context of real-world problems. They will train future generations of citizens able to work in different multicultural contexts, in several languages and at the crossroads of different fields. They will be attractive and competitive enough to attract students from outside the partnership and from outside Europe. Run jointly by Una Europa member universities, Una Europa joint Bachelor degrees draw from the strengths and expertise of each partner. The programmes are thus based on the latest state of research and on innovative pedagogies.

Una Europa joint Bachelor degrees are aligned with Una Europa guiding principles, which are:

- To promote and stimulate multilingualism;
- To facilitate multidisciplinary education;
- To foster integration between education, research and innovation;
- To create an international learning space in which physical and virtual presence are seamlessly integrated;
- To stimulate and integrate peer-to-peer learning and collaboration;
- To involve local communities in the educational practice;
- To stimulate active and deep-level learning by implementing high impact pedagogies (e.g. student co-creation, service-learning, internships).

Una Europa general learning goals forms also part of Una Europa Joint Bachelor programmes' goals:

- The development of European common values;

- The development of a set of transversal skills:
  - intercultural awareness;
  - problem solving and critical thinking;
  - entrepreneurial skills;
  - social skills;
  - civic and global skills.

This document aims at presenting the main characteristics of a Una Europa joint Bachelor degree. It draws from the experiences made by Una Europa within the framework of the Erasmus+ funded project “1Europe”, during which the first truly joint Bachelor degree in European Studies has been launched (Joint Bachelor in European Studies – BAES) and the concept for a joint Bachelor degree in Sustainability has been developed. With this pioneering effort, Una Europa aims to inspire higher education institutions across the European Higher Education Area.

# Main characteristics of a Una Europa Joint Bachelor degree

Una Europa Joint Bachelor degree	
<b>Type of qualification</b>	A joint Bachelor degree (level 6 of the European Qualifications Framework), awarded by at least 3 Una Europa member universities
<b>Duration of studies</b>	3 years of studies, divided in 6 semesters, 180 ECTS
<b>General objectives</b>	<p>This format aims at preparing students to <b>tackle global challenges</b> and succeed on <b>the international and European labour market</b>. Open to applicants who meet the entrance requirements for comparable programmes at the partner universities, Una Europa joint Bachelor degrees equip students with <b>disciplinary and interdisciplinary knowledge and skills, intercultural awareness, a problem-solving mindset as well as the ability to work in team and think critically</b>.</p> <p>Una Europa joint Bachelor degrees are <b>multilingual, multi- and interdisciplinary and student-centered</b>, and they contribute to the development of <b>European common values</b> and of <b>social and civic skills</b> of their students.</p> <p>The graduates of Una Europa Bachelor degrees will be able to study further in a Master's degree related to the disciplines they have studied.</p>
<b>Common learning outcomes</b>	<p>At the end of the programme, students will have reached the learning outcomes set for their programme. These learning outcomes are aligned with the Level 6 of the European Qualifications Framework. In general, students will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Demonstrate advanced knowledge of a field of work or study, involving a critical understanding of theories and principles from different disciplines</li> <li>- Identify and understand the interconnections between different disciplines in relation to a problem</li> <li>- Apply concepts and theories from different disciplines to solve problems related to their field of studies</li> <li>- Communicate, both in a written and in an oral form, in English (advanced level) and in at least a second foreign language (min. basic level)</li> <li>- Manage complex technical or professional activities or projects in a multidisciplinary, multilingual and multicultural environment</li> </ul>
<b>International</b>	Studies <b>at least at 2 European universities</b> , and <b>with mandatory physical mobility</b> . The students can additionally follow courses from other Una Europa universities virtually, physically and in a blended way. Several courses are developed and taught jointly by different partners.
<b>Multilingual</b>	The students study in English and in at least one other European language, and learn at least one foreign language.
<b>Structure of the study programme</b>	<p>The curriculum is organized around a common core of <b>disciplinary and multi- and interdisciplinary courses</b>, followed by all students. Through the common core, students acquire knowledge and skills in several disciplines and develop their interdisciplinary competences. In addition to this, students can choose a specialisation among a large choice, allowing them to deepen their knowledge in one or two disciplines and access disciplinary Master's degrees after graduating.</p> <p>Students are offered a large choice of courses, allowing them to personalise their curricula and <b>follow individualised study paths</b>, corresponding to their personal needs and interests.</p> <p>Internships and summer/winter school can also be embedded within the curriculum.</p>

The study programme of Una Europa joint Bachelor degrees are based **on the strengths and expertise** of the different partners involved, contributing to the quality of the programme. The programme also includes **jointly created courses** developed and taught by several Una Europa partners. They are research-based (in the sense that they may include an introductory research module), and they involve the use of innovative pedagogies.

# Overcoming barriers and challenges

National legislations in Europe are still quite protective of their Bachelor degrees, despite the Bologna process which contributed greatly to a harmonisation of European higher education systems. While the national regulatory frameworks have evolved through time, to facilitate the creation of new Erasmus+ funded joint Master's degrees and allow European University Alliances to experiment with the creation of new joint educational offers, many restrictions still exist for Bachelor degrees. The discrepancies between the national legislations constitute barriers to the development of joint Bachelor degrees in Europe, and restrict the possibilities of universities to design their programmes freely. Therefore, universities wishing to engage in the development of such programmes need to enquire about their possibilities to do so. These regulations might impact:

- Admission requirements
- Tuition fees
- Requirements to accredit a joint programme
- Content of the study programme (duration of studies, number of courses and exams, ECTS per course, Bachelor thesis, exams and study regulations, ...)
- Legality of a jointly awarded degree and a joint diploma
- Quality assurance

Una Europa universities mapped their regulatory frameworks and specified for each element if the regulation comes from the national level, the regional level or from the institution itself. This overview was crucial in the solution-finding process, and it is therefore recommended to each consortium of universities wishing to develop jointly a Bachelor degree to start with a similar mapping.

This section provides an overview of the challenging aspects to setting-up a joint Bachelor degree identified by Una Europa member universities and gives examples of solutions that can be applied. It is based on the experiences made by Una Europa partners in conceptualising and developing two joint Bachelor degrees (Joint Bachelor in European Studies (BAES) and Joint Bachelor in Sustainability (BA-SUS)), individual experiences of different Una Europa partners and the expertise of the different [Una Europa thematic clusters of professionals](#).

It is important to keep in mind that all joint degree programmes are **singular and unique in their structures**, because the partners, the learning goals and learning outcomes, the mobility arrangements and the available resources are very specific to each new degree programme. The solutions found by the teams developing the BAES and the BA-SUS are not prescriptive, but they are meant as an inspiration for the development of future joint Bachelor degrees.



# 1. Degree certification

The Council of Europe defines a joint degree as “a higher education qualification issued jointly by at least two or more higher education institutions or jointly by one or more higher education institutions and other awarding bodies, on the basis of a study programme developed and/or provided jointly by the higher education institutions, possibly also in cooperation with other institutions.”<sup>1</sup> Una Europa based its definition of a joint degree on this definition. However, Una Europa considers that a Una Europa joint degree shall be awarded by at least 3 Una Europa member universities, and it should lead to the issuance of a single diploma (a “parchment”) to the successful students. The degree certification is indeed an important aspect of a joint degree, as it has an impact on the perceived level of jointness of the programme.

## Awarding the joint degree

All degree-awarding universities shall form part of a consortium and award the joint degree to their successful students. However, doing so might in some cases be problematic for some partners. Even if national regulations might not formally prevent a partner to award a degree to students who have never studied physically at their university (or taken credits at their university), it may be in conflict with their existing academic regulations. The degree-awarding universities should clarify and agree on the conditions under which their institution will award the joint degree to the students enrolled in the programme. The conditions might be related to the minimum length of the physical stay at their university, the number of ECTS taken at their university, and how virtual mobility and jointly created courses will be considered at each institution.

Two practices exist for the award of joint degrees:

- The degree is awarded by all degree-awarding institutions, regardless of where the students have physically studied/validated credits. This option has been chosen by the BAES team.
- The degree is awarded to the successful students by only the degree-awarding institutions at which the students have physically studied. Depending on the study path followed by the student, the degree will be awarded to the student by only some degree-awarding institutions out of the consortium. In that case, the students must be informed about the impact of their choice of mobility path on their degree before choosing their study path within the programme. The diploma supplement however should mention which institutions form part of the consortium, and an additional certificate issued by all involved parties may also be issued to the students.

## Issuing a joint diploma

A Una Europa joint degree ideally leads to the issuance of a joint diploma, i.e. a single document stating that the student has been awarded a joint degree. The joint diploma can be signed either by one partner in the name of the other members of the consortium (under the condition that all members of the consortium are allowed to do so), or by the chairperson of a joint committee overseeing all activities related to the joint degree (under the condition that all members of the consortium are allowed to do so), or individually by all degree-awarding partners. It is usually the responsibility of the coordinating university to collect all signatures (or to sign on behalf of all partners), print the diploma and hand it out to the successful students.

However, some partners might have some restrictions about issuing a joint diploma. These restrictions can for example concern the information and elements which need to figure on the diploma, the required visa, the design of the diploma or even the paper that should be used to print the diploma on. The main challenge in the matter is to find a way to design a diploma complying with all national requirements and which would have a credible appearance and represent

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<sup>1</sup> Definition based on the definition given by the Council of Europe/UNESCO-CEPES, in its Recommendation on the Recognition of Joint Degrees, 2004.



an added-value for the students. The degree-awarding partners should compare and discuss what needs to figure on the joint diploma and agree jointly on a final diploma template.

The partners who would not be allowed to issue a joint diploma together with the consortium can issue another diploma in addition to the joint diploma awarded by the other members of the consortium. In that case, the successful students will be awarded a double degree (or a multiple degree if several partners finds themselves in this situation). In that case, it is recommended to clarify the degree of jointness of the curriculum in the diploma supplement, and clearly indicate the participation of all involved partners. Issuing an additional joint certificate can also help highlighting the jointness of the programme to the students.

## 2. Accreditation and quality assurance

### Recognition of the degree and accreditation

Each new degree has to exist legally and meet quality standards. Universities in Europe follow different rules: some universities are accredited by their ministries and can accredit new degrees on their own (following an internal approval process), while others have to go through an external accreditation process in addition.

The European Approach for the Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes simplifies the external accreditation for all the partners and certifies that a degree programme meets European quality standards. The consortium should use this approach every time one of the partners require an external accreditation at programme level. Through the European Approach, one accreditation agency (registered in EQAR and chosen by the consortium) coordinates the accreditation process for the programme, in close collaboration with the accreditation agencies of the different countries involved in the programme (whenever necessary). However, not all EU member states joined the European Approach, meaning that some partners might need to additionally accredit the degree on their own. For example, the Una Europa Joint Bachelor in European Studies was accredited via the European Approach for the Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes, coordinated by the Dutch – Flemish Accreditation Agency (NVAO), and some partner universities had to undergo an additional national accreditation procedure to satisfy national quality assurance requirements.

While the European Approach tackles the external accreditation, several institutions need to go through internal programme approval processes before starting the joint external accreditation procedure. The internal procedures may take several months for some partners.

### Quality assurance

Educational quality and continuous improvement of Una Europa joint degrees is a priority for the members of the alliance. The partners have jointly developed a joint internal quality assurance strategy which enables them to continuously oversee and enhance the quality of their joint degree programmes, in collaboration with all relevant stakeholders. The internal quality assurance strategy seeks to build on the existing structures within the partner universities to the maximum extent, adding only the core practices required to ensure smooth communication and cooperation on enhancement activities between the Parties. The Parties should apply joint internal quality assurance processes in accordance with part one of the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the EHEA (ESG).

Trust between the Parties is the key aspect of the joint internal quality assurance strategy. Based on this, the partners should make maximal use of their existing methods, in order to avoid duplicating efforts and allow to focus on effectiveness and continuous improvement.

The joint degree shall be developed and run according to three main principles for the international quality assurance: the principle of verified trust, the principle of subsidiarity and the principle of core practices. In addition to these principles, the partners involved in a joint degree need to know exactly what each Party is responsible for, how the outcomes of each Party's internal quality assurance procedures are shared, and how actions for further enhancement are discussed and dealt with whenever required. To this end, a joint structure to monitor the quality of the entire joint programme and to ensure transparency in the functioning of the internal quality assurance systems of each partner shall be established.

### 3. Management of the degree

Managing a joint degree requires that the partners agree on a joint management and governance structure. The bigger the consortium is, the most needed it is to divide the responsibilities between the different partners in a coherent way, and to ensure a good communication flow between them.

A joint degree can involve different categories of partners:

- The degree-awarding institutions, which are the universities awarding the degree. It is necessary to appoint a coordinating party among the degree-awarding parties. The coordinating party can revolve after a certain period of time.
- Other university partners: these partners contribute to and offer parts of the programme, but they do not award the degree to the students. In the BAES for example, these partners are referred to as “Mobility partners”.
- External associated partners: non-university partners can also contribute to the degree (for example by offering internship placements).

Depending on the partners contributing to the degree and their respective roles, the consortium should define how each of the partner will be involved in the management and governance structure of the programme. The guide “Joint programmes from A to Z” developed in the framework of the Erasmus+ FaBoTo+ project (Facilitating the Use of Bologna Tools in higher education) lists the different tasks that needs to be dealt with:

- “joint coordination and external representation of the consortium,
- joint development and monitoring of the academic content of the programme,
- joint quality assurance (academic and administrative; internal and external),
- joint financial administration and decisions,
- joint student administration (joint selection and complaints handling procedure),
- joint admission, registration, assessment, grading and examinations, transfer of credits, archiving of student records for future enquiries, etc.),
- joint promotion of the programme and joint student recruitment.”<sup>2</sup>

Different bodies and management committees can be set up to take care of these tasks. The roles, responsibilities and composition of each committees should be regulated within the consortium agreement. Each consortium should reflect on these tasks and develop their own governance model.

It is recommended that each partner identifies an academic and an administrative coordinator at each institution. They will respectively be responsible for overseeing the content of the programme and for taking care of the administrative and organisational aspects related to the programme.

As an example, following governance structure was implemented within the BAES:

- The Academic Steering Committee is in charge of the coordination and implementation of the programme;
- The Programme Board discusses and decides on academic and educational aspects, also related to admissions and quality assurance via sub-committees;
- The Student Committee act as a Consultative Body representing students’ interests;
- And the Supervisory Council, consisting of Vice-Rectors, oversees the overall functioning and sustainability of the programme

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<sup>2</sup> Becker, Rosa (Stitching Nuffic), *Joint Programmes from A to Z. A reference guide for practitioners*. Developed as part of the NufficFaBoTo+ project, coordinated by the Dutch National Agency Erasmus+, The Hague, April 2020, p. 53.

## 4. Financial issues

How to fund the joint programme is a crucial issue for the success and the sustainability of the programme. Financial models vary between universities depending on the structure of the higher education system of each country, and regulations on tuition fees also vary greatly between countries and universities, depending on the national/regional law and university regulations. Finding an appropriate financial model for a joint Bachelor degree is probably one of the biggest challenges that the consortium needs to face.

A good practice to overcome this challenge is to start with calculating the **effective full costs of the entire programme**. Based on this, each degree-awarding institution needs to decide on their financial contribution to the programme. External sources of funding might also be sought, and it is also important to think about the possibility of a scholarship scheme for the students.

To (partly) cover the costs, it is possible to charge students **tuition fees**. While some universities are free to decide on tuition fees, other must comply with different rules, for example:

- Some national/regional law on higher education prevent universities in their region/country to charge tuition fees from the students (e.g. Berlin Higher Education Act).
- National/Regional law in some countries set different amounts of tuition fees depending of the origin of the students (EEA citizens vs. non-EEA citizens). This is for example the case in France and in Finland.
- In some countries, the amount of tuition fees is set based on the income of the students (e.g. in Italy).

Una Europa is committed to the **principles of accessibility, equity and inclusion** – these principles should be reflected upon when deciding on the amount of the tuition fees. At the same time, the consortium might ask itself what would justify the fee (in particular in comparison with other national Bachelor degrees). If the costs for the programme cannot be fully covered by the tuition fees, the partners should make sure that there are no hidden costs for the students: the students should be aware of the remaining costs before starting the programme (for example, costs for their participation in a summer school or for mobility).

When it comes to deciding on a tuition fee policy, two options exist: setting a **single fee policy** for the whole programme, or implementing **different tuition fees schemes** depending on the study locations of the students, or depending on their country of origin. The second option might simplify the compromise process between different national laws, however, having different fee policies may create inequalities between the students and might have an impact on the choices of mobility for the students. It is also important to remember that discrimination between EU students is forbidden by European law. Having a single fee for the entire consortium presents the advantage of treating the students equally and adds to the perceived jointness of the programme. The single fee policy must however accommodate national regulations. A solution for this, often used within Erasmus Mundus Joint Master's degrees, consists of having one **partner collecting the fees** from the students in the name of the consortium. This partner must be legally allowed to collect those fees, and will redistribute the fees accordingly to the other members of the consortium.

For example, the BAES implemented a single fee policy, where EEA students and non-EEA students pay a different amount. The amount of the fees was set based on the average amount charged by the degree-awarding institutions for their national Bachelor programmes. The fees are collected by the coordinating university in the name of the consortium.

## 5. Application and admission

Joint Bachelor programmes, thanks to their innovative structure, should be attractive to students from diverse horizons and backgrounds. Una Europa aims at **promoting diversity and inclusion**, and thus welcomes applications from all types of students. Therefore, students from all parts of the world and with non-traditional entrance qualifications might be accepted within this kind of degrees.

To contribute to the perceived jointness of the programme and simplify the application process for the students, it is recommended that the consortium agrees on a single application and admission procedure.

### Eligibility and application procedures

The eligibility and application procedures for joint Bachelor degrees must be **in line with national and local legislations**.

These might however vary across countries: some universities might for example require that the students undergo an entry test as part of their application to the institution, or apply via a national platform. These aspects must be discussed within the consortium and presented clearly to the interested students. While discussing admission, selection and enrolment procedures, the consortium should also consider:

- the visa requirements that some students might need to meet. The students should have sufficient time to apply for a visa after receiving their admission letter and before the start of the programme;
- the documents they would accept for students with non-traditional backgrounds;
- language requirements and certificates, both for the admission to the programme, and for accessing the different study tracks (if relevant).

It is recommended to let one institution check the eligibility of the applications to ensure the equal treatment of all applicants.

### Selection and admission

The programme might be selective, and in that case, a joint selection and admission committee across institutions should be created. Some national and local legislations might however impact the way students can be admitted in the programme, and it is therefore important to **verify that it is legally possible for the degree-awarding partners to organise a selection of students and to limit the number of students** who can be admitted in the programme. For example, some universities have to admit all students fulfilling formal admission requirements, while other universities have limited admissions via *numerus clausus*.

Selection criteria must be clear to the students and agreed upon among the partners. This must be discussed thoroughly among the partners to make sure that all admitted students will be able to follow the programme at the different institutions delivering the programme.

### Enrolment

Upon admission to the programme, the students should enroll at one university (their start university or the coordinating university) and pay the tuition fees to this institution. The students will additionally need to be registered at all degree-awarding universities to be able to be awarded their degree at the end of the programme. This should not be the burden of the students: the partners should discuss how the students' information will be shared across the consortium, and verify in advance which documents they need to be able to enrol the students in their local systems.

## 6. Duration of studies

Even if the Bologna process contributed greatly to the harmonisation of degree structures at Bachelor, Master and PhD level, differences in the practice still exist. At Bachelor level, a degree lasts in many European countries and universities 3 years and consists of 180 ECTS. Therefore, Una Europa made the choice to award Bachelor degrees of 180 ECTS.

However, some universities in Europe traditionally offer undergraduate programmes of 4 years and for 240 ECTS (e.g. in Spain or in Great-Britain). In Spain, the Royal decree 822/2021 opened the possibility for Spanish universities involved in European University Alliances to award Bachelor degrees of 180 ECTS (3 years). For other universities, it must be checked whether it is possible to award a 180 ECTS Bachelor degree after 3 years of studies, and under which conditions these degrees will give access to Master's degrees to the graduates of the programme. In case it would not give access to a Master's degree, the consortium can explore whether they can offer a 4-years Bachelor degree or if they can organise an optional 'top-up year' for the students who want to access specific Master's degrees.

## 7. Academic calendars

Academic calendars differ between institutions across Europe: autumn and spring semesters in some universities can correspond to winter and summer semesters in others. These differences may impact the possibilities of mobility for the students and complicate the definition of courses and exams dates for joint courses. It is therefore important to compare the academic calendars within the consortium and reflect about this aspect when planning the joint programme.

A good practice is to allow the partners to keep their own academic calendars for the courses they offer. For joint courses, the BAES agreed on a joint calendar which fit within the academic calendars of each institution. Another option could be to consider offering online courses with flexible start dates.

This difference between academic calendars can also be used as an opportunity in the curriculum design process: gaps between semesters can be a good moment for offering summer/winter school to the students, or to insert internships within the curricula.

## 8. Interdisciplinarity: learning outcomes and further studies

Una Europa joint Bachelor degrees are interdisciplinary by nature. While this aspect contributes to making Una Europa degrees particularly innovative and relevant for the students and their future careers, interdisciplinarity is normally a learning outcome foreseen for the Level 7 of the European Qualification Framework (EQF): this creates additional challenges for the establishment and design of such Bachelor programmes.

National legislations might indeed only provide for disciplinary degrees at Bachelor level, and thus limit the possibilities of creation of interdisciplinary degree titles. In that case, it is important that the concerned partners inform their respective Ministry of Higher Education of their project at an early-stage and enquire about their right to award jointly with other universities an interdisciplinary Bachelor degree. In some countries, while it is possible to attach a degree to more than one discipline, a leading discipline must still be identified, and more than half of the learning outcomes from this discipline must be achieved by the students. Some national laws are also quite specific about the learning outcomes that a student must achieve in a discipline. Respecting all these rules might complicate setting the learning outcomes for the programme and impact the design of the curriculum.

During the curriculum design process, it is also important to verify that the programme will allow the students to reach the learning outcomes foreseen for the Level 6 of the European Qualification Framework and acquire the academic rigour required to pursue studies at Master's level. Some universities might also have policies describing different types of courses that a student shall take during the programme. The partners shall map these rules and discuss them before designing their own programme.

The interdisciplinary nature of a joint Bachelor degree can also question the possibilities of further studies in a Master's degree after graduating, in particular when interdisciplinary Master's degrees in the field do not exist at the partners' universities. Some partners may want to allow the students to pursue in a disciplinary Master's degree, and this will certainly have consequences on the content of the degree programme: the study programme will have to be aligned with the entry criteria for the disciplinary Master's programme concerned and offer the students the possibility to acquire sufficient ECTS in the discipline concerned. For many universities, it is compulsory to identify clearly the possibilities of future studies (or work opportunities) for the graduates, and communicate clearly about this to the students.

There is no obvious solution to these challenges. All these points must be considered and discussed at length among the partners. Agreeing early on the professional and academic opportunities for the graduates helps writing appropriate learning outcomes and defining the corresponding curriculum. A good practice to ensure that the students will acquire the interdisciplinary competence consists of having the teaching staff of different disciplines co-teaching or working together on designing the courses and the assessments. Within Una Europa, a team composed of the Teaching and Learning experts at each university supports the academics in writing appropriate learning outcomes and checks that the programme will allow all students, regardless of their mobility paths, to reach them all.

Una Europa joint Bachelor degrees are developed around a **common core of courses** (sometimes called '**Truncus Communis**') that each student has to follow. In addition to the compulsory common core courses, students can specialise in one or two disciplines. The common core can consist of disciplinary and multi- and interdisciplinary courses. The choice of a specialisation facilitates the transition to a disciplinary Master's degree after graduating.



## 9. Distribution of ECTS in the curriculum

ECTS can often not be distributed freely between courses within the study programme, as both national legislations and university rules often regulate the options. The regulations can concern the number of ECTS per course, the number of ECTS for the Bachelor thesis, the balance between compulsory and elective courses, and the number of exams that a student is allowed to take in a Bachelor degree.

In fact, some universities have fixed rules about the **workload a course** must represent (for example, 5 or 10 ECTS). Others set a minimum amount of ECTS for a course (e.g. 5 ECTS). If some universities offer courses of less ECTS than what is recognised at another university of the consortium, the smaller courses can be grouped into bigger units. National and university regulations can also in some cases regulate the **number of ECTS for the Bachelor thesis**. Within the BAES, 6 ECTS are awarded for the Bachelor thesis, as this amount suited all degree-awarding partners. Additionally, regulations on Bachelor degrees might require that the enrolled students study **compulsory courses**. The compulsory courses might include courses dedicated to transversal skills, languages, or even physical education. Compromises might need to be found within the consortium to ensure the design of a meaningful curriculum, yet not too complex for the students and universities involved. Within the BAES for example, the students starting their studies on the campus of the Uniwersytet Jagiellonski w Krakowie take physical education courses, as all other students enrolled in a degree at this university. They do not obtain extra-credits for them.

Additionally, Una Europa joint Bachelor degrees are designed around a flexible and learning-centred approach, and should thus allow the students to choose some **elective courses**. Offering elective courses indeed gives the chance to students to create their own learning path within a degree, so that the curriculum better fits their needs, their own interests and their professional aspirations. Elective courses can concern the major and the minor courses the students will follow, language courses and transversal skills. The **amount of optionality** is however regulated for some partners: this might depend on the discipline of the degree or on university regulations. When agreeing about the number of elective courses a student may take, it is important to keep in mind that the more optionality the students have in their studies, the more counselling the students will need.

Finally, some laws may also limit the amount of **final assessments counting towards the degree** a student is allowed to take during his/her Bachelor studies. Una Europa partners were confronted with this rule for the BAES. To overcome this issue, the partners clustered courses into bigger blocks of courses. This is to consider carefully when designing the study programme and discussed early with the student administration services at each university.

As an orientation, the table below suggests a distribution of ECTS for different types of courses. It is nevertheless important to discuss this within the consortium.

Part of the study programme	Type of courses	Suggested number of ECTS
Common core	Interdisciplinary courses	Between 20 and 30 ECTS
	Disciplinary courses	Between 20 and 40 ECTS
	Transversal skills	Between 30 and 35 ECTS
	BA thesis	Between 6 and 10 ECTS
Specialisation 1	Discipline A	Between 60 and 80 ECTS
Specialisation 2	Discipline B	Between 20 and 30 ECTS

# 10. Mobility

Una Europa joint Bachelor degrees are international by nature and mobility therefore constitutes an important part of the students experience of the programme. Different types of mobilities can be organised and planned within a degree programme: **physical mobility, virtual mobility and blended mobility**. It is also possible to envisage **mobility of academic staff** in addition to student's mobility. Una Europa Bachelor degrees should integrate seamlessly all types of mobilities.

Mobility represents the opportunity for the students to meet teachers, researchers and students from different universities, **experience different teaching and learning methods and environments, adopt another perspective** on a study object, and possibly study in another language and **improve their language skills**. Through mobility, students also develop their **intercultural skills**. While the students can develop those skills through all types of mobility, a longer stay abroad enable the students to truly meet another culture, adapt to another way of living and studying, learn and practice languages more intensively and finally become **more autonomous**. Una Europa joint Bachelor degrees therefore foresee that the students undertake a physical mobility during the programme. Ideally, the students should study physically at 2 or 3 different universities and take credits at other universities.

## Physical mobility

The consortium can decide freely on the physical mobility paths of the students. However, it is important to remember that the current Erasmus+ programme can only fund **maximum 12 months of mobility** within one cycle. The funding can concern both mobility for studies and for internships, and the 12 months must not be consecutive. If the mobility foreseen in the programme exceed altogether 12 months, the universities would have to offer additional funding to their students.

While planning the mobility paths of the students, the consortium should pay attention to the quality of the student experience. Physical mobility can be demanding for students: some of them will move away from home for the first time. They will need to go through a certain number of administrative procedures, find a new home and adapt to their new living and learning environment. Mobility in the first year of studies is therefore not recommended. Ideally, students should be prepared for and accompanied during their stay abroad. To increase the learning effect for the students, they should also be encouraged to reflect on their experience upon their return. It is also worth remembering that mobility alone does not automatically lead to the acquisition of intercultural skills.

It is recommended to start with planning the content of the study programme first: the mobility paths may then be determined depending on the different expertise of the partners, and their capacity to deliver the necessary courses or specialisations.

## Virtual mobility

Virtual mobilities, unlike physical or blended mobility, cannot be funded by the Erasmus+ programme. They may however represent a good opportunity to offer an additional mobility experience to the students besides the 12 months of physical mobility which can be funded under the Erasmus+ programme. Those mobilities require the use of e-learning tools and of a Learning Management System. The students enrolled in a joint degree should get access to the LMS and the e-learning tools needed to follow the course. Within Una Europa, the education specialists at each institution support the academic staff in designing and planning the online courses.

# Blended mobility

Blended mobilities combine both physical and virtual mobilities. The Erasmus+ programme 2021-2027 now includes funding for this type of mobility under the 'blended intensive programmes'. Blended intensive programmes are short and intensive programmes, which includes virtual exchanges and a physical stay abroad of 5-30 days. The virtual exchanges can take place before and/or after the physical mobility.

## Examples of mobility paths

Model 1: the BAES model

<b>Physical mobility</b>	<b>In this model, the students can start the programme at any of the degree-awarding parties. University 2 or 3 can be a degree awarding party or another university (contributing party).</b>				
	Year 1 Start University	Semester 1.01	Start university mandatory		No mobility options
		Semester 1.02	Start University mandatory		No mobility options
	Year 2 Start University/ International Year	Semester 2.01	Start University	University 2	Optional Mobility
		Semester 2.02	University 2	University 2	Mobility mandatory
	Year 3 International Year/ Start University	Semester 3.01	University 2	University 2	Mobility mandatory
Semester 3.02		University 2 or University 3	University 2, University 3 or Start University	Optional Mobility	
<b>Virtual mobility</b>	During the first 3 semesters, the students, regardless of the campus they are physically studying at, follow the same courses (the so-called 'truncus communis'). These courses are jointly created by different partners, and are delivered in a virtual way, allowing the students from different campuses to virtually meet, learn together and exchange with each other.				
<b>Advantages and limits</b>	Advantages: A lot of flexibility for the students regarding their choice of physical mobility and of courses. Limits: Many courses must be offered at several locations simultaneously. The current Erasmus+ programme cannot fund 3 semesters of physical mobility abroad.				

Model 2: the specialisation model

<b>Physical mobility</b>	<b>In this model, the students start the programme all together at one university of the consortium (the start university may revolve after a certain period of time) and follow all together the same courses ('common core' courses). During their first year (according to the application dates for Erasmus+ scholarships), students choose a specialization track and go during the second year to the university offering the chosen track. During year 3, the students can come back to the start university or go to another university of the consortium. The first year of the programme might involve staff mobility from other partners.</b>					
			<b>Track 1</b>	<b>Track 2</b>	<b>Track 3</b>	<b>Track 4</b>
	Year 1	Semester 1.01	<b>University 1</b>			
		Semester 1.02	<b>University 1</b>			
	Year 2	Semester 2.01	University 2	University 3	University 4	University 5
		Semester 2.02	University 2	University 3	University 4	University 5
Year 3	Semester 3.01	University 2	University 3	University 4	University 5	
	Semester 3.02	University 1, 2 or another one	University 1, 3, or another one	University 1, 4 or another one	University 1, 5 or another one	
<b>Virtual mobility</b>	Can happen throughout the whole programme. Some courses are shared among the tracks and can be delivered in a virtual way, allowing the students from different campuses to virtually meet, learn together and exchange with each other.					
<b>Advantages and limits</b>	Advantages: The students all meet physically at the beginning of the programme. Each partner has to offer only one track. Mobility path is determined according to tracks and the students can be accompanied through the process. Limits: Lesser flexibility for the students in choosing their mobility destination. The current Erasmus+ programme cannot fund more than 2 semesters of physical mobility abroad.					

Model 3: the track model

<b>Physical mobility</b>	<p>In this model, the students choose their track when applying to the programme. Depending on their track, they will start at a different university. The second year is spent at another partner, depending on the track, and the third year can take place at the first, the second or a third university.</p>				
		<b>Track 1</b>	<b>Track 2</b>	<b>Track 3</b>	
Year 1	Semester 1.01	University 1	University 4	University 7	
	Semester 1.02	University 1	University 4	University 7	
Year 2	Semester 2.01	University 2	University 5	University 8	
	Semester 2.02	University 2	University 5	University 8	
Year 3	Semester 3.01	University 3	University 6	University 9	
	Semester 3.02	University 1, 2 or 3	University 4, 5 or 6	University 7, 8 or 9	
<b>Virtual mobility</b>	<p>Courses shared across the tracks (courses belonging to the common core in particular) should be offered in a virtual way, thus allowing the students from different tracks to meet, learn together and exchange ideas. Other courses might be offered in a virtual way as well. These courses can take place throughout the entire programme, depending on the needs of the programme.</p>				
<b>Advantages and limits</b>	<p>Advantages: The students from each track stay together for almost the entire degree, and can thus support each other. Each partner has to offer only one track. Mobility path is determined according to tracks and the students can be accompanied through the process. Limits: The students might never meet all together. The students cannot choose their mobility destinations, as they are determined by the choice of a track. The current Erasmus+ programme cannot fund more than 2 semesters of physical mobility abroad.</p>				

# 11. Multilingualism

An important aspect of Una Europa joint Bachelor degrees is that they are multilingual. They thus **promote the European linguistic and cultural diversity**, prepare students to work and live in a European and multilingual context, strengthen intercultural understanding and contribute to promoting European citizenship among the students.

To that end, the students enrolled in Una Europa joint Bachelor programmes are expected to study in English and take at least one course in another Una Europa official language. They also learn at least one foreign language during the programme (at beginner, intermediate or advanced level, depending on their previous knowledge). Graduates of Una Europa joint Bachelor degrees should be able to communicate both orally and in a written form in English (at an advanced level) and in at least an additional foreign language (min. A1 level). Students are expected to graduate from the programme with improved language skills.

Students enrolled in the programmes will have different mother tongues and different language skills, and they will study and learn in languages that are not their mother tongues. This has clear benefits for the students: language is not only a mean of communication, but it also carries culture and will support the intercultural learning of the students throughout the programme. However, studying in a foreign language can be challenging for the students and hamper their learning. Una Europa joint Bachelor degrees should contribute to **increasing the language awareness of the students**. It is important that the teaching staff is aware of the language needs of the students and of the challenge that language might represent for them.

To ensure the success of the students, **language requirements** should be set up for the programme. Many courses in the programme will probably be taught in English, and it is recommended to require minimum a B2 level in English as an entry requirement. This minimum level might also be required from international students for their visa request. If students have to follow courses in another language, the academic staff should consider setting similar entry requirements in that language, to guarantee the success of the students. Offering academic English classes, or discipline-specific language courses, can also support the learning of the students and reinforce their confidence in studying in a foreign language. Whenever possible, the programme should also give the opportunity to the students to follow a language course before starting the programme.

While defining the language policy of the study programme, the partners should also consider that some national or university regulations include language skills as a fixed part of a Bachelor programme. The language expectations might also have an impact on the study path chosen by the students.

# Glossary – Core common definitions

## **Accreditation**

Accreditation is defined as 'a formal and independent decision indicating that a programme and/or an institution meet(s) certain predefined quality standards.' (Source: European Consortium for Accreditation in Higher Education).

The process of external quality review used in higher education to scrutinize colleges, universities, and higher education programs for quality assurance and quality improvement. (Source: Council for Higher Education Accreditation).

## **Awarding institution**

A higher education institution issuing qualifications, i.e. degrees, diplomas or other certificates. In the case of joint degrees, an awarding institution is one of the two or more institutions involved in conferring the joint degree thus formally recognising the achievements of a student enrolled in the joint programme. (Source: European consortium for accreditation)

## **Curriculum**

Curriculum' is used as an umbrella term to indicate the study programme, the learning path and the individual study programme (ISP). (<https://www.kuleuven.be/english/education/educational-glossary/educational-glossary-c/curriculum>)

## **Course**

A course is a coherent set of learning and assessment activities, aimed at reaching goals regarding knowledge, insight, skills and attitudes. (see also <https://www.kuleuven.be/english/education/educational-glossary/educational-glossary-c/course>)

## **Jointly created course**

A course jointly created and taught by teachers from different institutions.

## **(Joint programme) consortium**

A group of two or more higher education institutions and potentially other contributors (e.g. research centres) with the objective of integrating teaching and learning activities for providing a joint programme; although not all participants necessarily award a (joint) degree. (Source: European consortium for accreditation)

## **Degree**

The qualification awarded by a higher education institution to a student after he/she has successfully completed his/her study programme. A degree is awarded to a student when he/she has achieved the learning outcomes foreseen by the study programme. The term 'degree' is not used here as a synonym for 'study programme'.

## **Joint degree**

A joint degree should be understood as referring to a higher education qualification issued jointly by at least two or more higher education institutions or jointly by one or more higher education institutions and other awarding bodies, on the basis of a study programme developed and/or provided jointly by the higher education institutions, possibly also in cooperation with other institutions. A joint degree may be issued as:

b. a joint diploma issued by the institutions offering the study programme in question without being accompanied by any national diploma

(Source: Council of Europe/UNESCO-CEPES, Recommendation on the Recognition of Joint Degrees, 2004.)

## **Multiple degree**

Separate degrees awarded by higher education institutions offering the joint programme attesting the successful completion of this programme. (Source: European consortium for accreditation)

## **Double degree**

Two degrees awarded by higher education institutions offering the joint programme attesting the successful completion of this programme. → *A double degree is a specific type of multiple degree.* (Source: European consortium for accreditation)

## **Dual degree**

Two degrees awarded individually, attesting the successful completion of two separate curricula, with potential overlap and efficiencies in course-taking, and, if more than one institution is involved, each institution is primarily responsible for its own degree. (Source : European consortium for accreditation)

## **Diploma**

The official document (the parchment) attesting that a student has obtained a degree. A diploma is delivered by the institution(s) who award(s) the degree.

## **Diploma supplement**

The [Diploma Supplement](#) is produced by higher education institutions according to standards agreed by the Commission, the Council of Europe and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). It is also part of the [Europass framework transparency tools](#).



The Diploma Supplement is designed as an aid to support the [recognition of academic qualifications](#). The Diploma Supplement is an important tool of the European Higher Education Area for graduates to ensure that their degrees are recognised by higher education institutions, public authorities and employers in their home countries and abroad. It does, however, not represent a Curriculum Vitae or a substitute for the original qualification.

The Diploma Supplement contains eight sections providing information regarding:

- the holder of the qualification
- the qualification type and its originating institution
- the qualification level
- the content of the course and results gained
- function of the qualification
- certification of the supplement
- details of the national higher education system concerned (provided by the [National Academic Recognition Information Centres \(NARIC\)](#))
- other relevant details

Graduates in all countries taking part in the [Bologna Process](#) have the right to receive the Diploma Supplement automatically, free of charge and in any major European language.

(Source: [https://ec.europa.eu/education/diploma-supplement\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/education/diploma-supplement_en))

For a Una Europa joint programme, the students should have the possibility to obtain the diploma supplement in English and in another Una Europa language (upon request).

### **Interdisciplinarity**

An approach to curriculum integration that generates an understanding of themes and ideas that cut across disciplines and of the connections between different disciplines and their relationship to the real world. It normally emphasizes process and meaning rather than product and content by combining contents, theories, methodologies and perspectives from two or more disciplines. (Source: UNESCO bureau de l'éducation)

### **Learning outcomes**

Learning outcomes indicate which knowledge, skills and attitudes, or an integration of them in competences, a student should obtain throughout their learning path. The learning outcomes represent the minimum requirements for students graduating from a certain study programme. (KU Leuven educational glossary: Learning outcomes – Educational glossary (kuleuven.be))

### **Module**

A module can refer to a part of a course, a single course, or a group of courses, depending on the university offering it. When using the word 'module' in an international context, it is recommended to explain to what it refers.

Examples:

- Module (Freie Universität Berlin, Universidad Complutense Madrid): a group of courses, supervised by a teaching staff member. Students are evaluated at the level of the module.
- Module (University of Bologna): a part of a course



## **Multidisciplinarity**

An approach to curriculum integration which focuses primarily on the different disciplines and the diverse perspectives they bring to illustrate a topic, theme or issue. A multidisciplinary curriculum is one in which the same topic is studied from the viewpoint of more than one discipline. Frequently multidisciplinary and crossdisciplinary are used as synonyms describing the aim to cross boundaries between disciplines. (Source: UNESCO bureau de l'éducation)

## **Multilingualism**

Multilingualism is understood as the ability of societies, institutions, groups and individuals to engage, on a regular basis, with more than one language in their day-to-day lives. In this context, a language is defined neutrally as a variant which a group ascribes to itself for use as its habitual code of communication. This includes regional languages, dialects, and sign languages. In addition, the term multilingualism is used for referring to the co-existence of different language communities in one geographical or geo-political area or political entity. (Source: European Commission)

## **Study programme**

A set of courses and modules organised in a logical/coherent way allowing a student to achieve the learning outcomes set for his/her degree. After successfully completing the whole study programme, a student obtains his/her degree.

## **Joint study programme**

An integrated curriculum coordinated and offered jointly by different higher education institutions and leading to a (double/multiple or joint) degree. Source: EQAR (2015) /ECTS Users guide

## **Transversal skills**

Skills that are typically considered as not specifically related to a particular job, task, academic discipline or area of knowledge and that can be used in a wide variety of situations and work settings (for example, organizational skills).

Key competences according to the European Reference Framework for Lifelong Learning:

- Literacy competence
- Multilingual competence
- Mathematical competence and competence in science, technology and engineering
- Digital competence
- Personal, social and leaning to learn competence
- Citizenship competence
- Entrepreneurship competence
- Cultural awareness and expression competence

(Source: UNESCO IBE 2013, Global)

# Annexes and useful resources

- BAES website: <https://baes.una-europa.eu/overview>
- [European Qualifications Framework](#)
- [Jef Cox et al. Quality Assurance in the context of a European University: a lean and trust-based approach for joint programmes](#)
- [Una Europa guidebook on online assessment](#)



**Una Europa vzw**

KU Leuven Campus Brussels

Warmoesberg 26

1000 Brussels – Belgium

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[info@una-europa.eu](mailto:info@una-europa.eu) ↗

[www.una-europa.eu](http://www.una-europa.eu) ↗

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