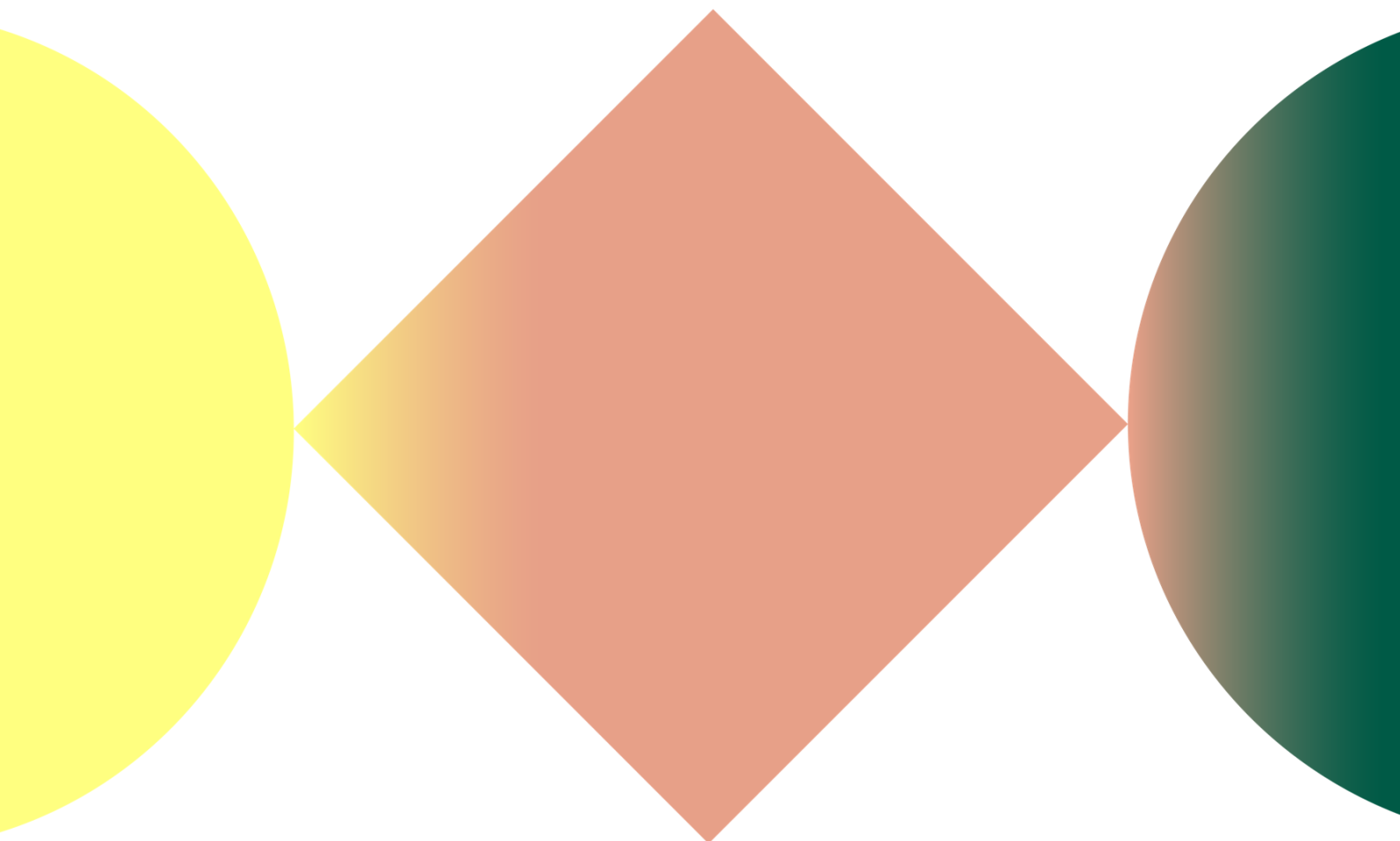


# The joint Bachelor



Una Europa Joint Innovative Format for Education

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# What?

Una Europa Joint Bachelor degrees harness the complementary strengths of the partner universities and follow the alliance's guiding pedagogical principles of offering **high-quality research-based education** that is **interdisciplinary, multilingual and international** at the core. Crucially, these programmes contribute to the development of **common European identity of all learners**, focusing on increased intercultural awareness, transversal and critical thinking skills. Una Europa Joint Bachelor programmes truly stand out in the unique ways they foster interdisciplinarity and the **integration of education and research** at undergraduate level and take the creation of **international learning spaces** to the next level.

Within Una Europa, joint degrees are understood as a higher education qualification awarded by minimum three Una Europa member institutions on the basis of a study programme jointly offered by the involved member institutions. The joint degree leads to a single document, issued by the institutions offering the programme, which is acknowledged as the recognised award of the joint degree.

# Why?

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 not only have the potential to boost the visibility and international competitiveness of the partner universities, attracting the best global talents, but they can also act a key tool for reinforcing collaboration in both education and research between partners. Together, the Una Europa partner universities **shape the future of higher education in Europe**.

The Una Europa universities share a commitment to drive forward the European Higher Education Area together and pioneer the next generation of joint programmes to inform key European policies, such as the [pathway towards a joint European Degree](#).

*The Una Europa Joint Bachelor in European Studies is the very first truly joint Bachelor's degree on the European market, accredited via the European Approach for the Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes. With this pioneering effort, Una Europa aims to inspire higher education institutions across the European Higher Education Area.*

# How?

The below section focuses on outlining the most important aspects to be considered when developing and implementing a joint programme at Bachelor level in an international context. It is important to highlight that all joint degree programmes are **unique in their structure**, due to the specifics in the underlying partnerships, learning objectives and outcomes, mobility arrangements and available resources. The solutions and recommendations provided in this document are designed to serve as inspiration for the development of future joint Bachelor degree programmes, rather than a fixed framework to be followed. They are primarily based on Una Europa's experiences in conceptualising two joint Bachelor programmes as well as further informed by the extensive expertise of the Una Europa partner universities in the development of joint programmes more broadly.

## 1. Creating a joint framework

The development and implementation of joint programmes remains a highly complex and resource-intensive undertaking across the European Higher Education Area, due to the wide range of administrative and legal obstacles that persist at regional, national as well as institutional levels to date. In the design process, it is recommended that the consortium creates an **overview of regulatory constraints** touching upon crucial areas, such as the structure of a Bachelor programme, student admission, tuition fees, accreditation and quality assurance.

When creating a joint framework, there are a number of key issues which need to be addressed together at the outset, in order to establish a common basis for the further development of the joint programme at hand. An overview can be found below along with some recommendations and examples of good practice.

### a) Programme structure

The programme structure should allow all students to reach the envisioned learning outcomes of the programme, regardless of their specialization, and should be in line with the legal and institutional requirements at the different partner universities. They may, for instance impact the content of the programme, the number of elective courses a student is allowed to choose, the distribution of ECTS throughout the programme, or even the number of exams a student is allowed to take. Una Europa Joint Bachelors are designed considering a number of core principles:

- **Balance of disciplinary & interdisciplinarity:** Una Europa Joint Bachelor programmes are organised around a common core of disciplinary and multi- and interdisciplinary courses, followed by all students. Subsequently, different specialisations are offered to allow students to specialise in one or two specific disciplines.
- **Flexible study paths:** Students are offered a large choice of courses, allowing them to personalise their curricula and follow individualised study paths, corresponding to their personal needs and interests.
- **Based on complementary strengths:** The programme is based on the strengths of each partner, which offer and co-develop courses in their field of expertise. The programme thus offers numerous virtual and physical mobility options to the students. Students study physically at at least two different universities from the Una Europa alliance, and follow virtual courses (co-)created and (co-)taught by researchers from various Una Europa institutions.

### b) Examination regulation

In order to ensure that the rights and obligations of students enrolled in the joint degree programme are governed by a common set regulations and quality standards for the grading of courses, examinations and appeals decision a joint education and examination regulation needs to be established.

*Example: In the BAES, the Programme Board developed an education and examination regulation with common regulations and quality standards for examinations as well as the bachelor thesis offered by the Degree Awarding Parties.*

### c) Student admission, recruitment and selection

Due to their innovative nature, joint programmes will be highly attractive for students from across Europe and the world. At the outset, clear eligibility and admission criteria must be set out, which are both transparent in nature and in line with national, regional and institutional requirements. While discussing admission, selection and enrolment procedures, the consortium should also consider visa requirements as well as language requirements and certificates.

- **Recommendation:** To underpin the 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.
- **Recommendation:** If a programme is selective, a joint selection and admission committee should be created across institutions. It is further recommended to organise the eligibility check of applications at one institution to ensure the equal treatment of all applicants.

### d) Joint student support

It is important to ensure that students enrolled in the joint programme have access to student facilities and student support services under the same conditions at all partner institutions. Beyond that, dedicated staff should be there to counsel and support students throughout their studies, including during mobility and in making choices regarding their specialisations.

- **Recommendation:** In order to ensure a clear support structure, each institution is encouraged to dedicate a single point of contact in charge of answering the questions of students as to student facilities and student support services

### e) Joint governance structure

The management of a joint degree programme requires appropriate joint management and governance structures, which becomes inherently more complex depending on the size of the consortium. Therefore, it is crucial that the consortium defines the exact involvement of each partner as well as their concrete roles and responsibilities, for example in relation to quality assurance, administration and financial management, coordination and external representation.

- **Recommendation:** Different bodies and management committees can be set up to take care of these tasks. The roles, responsibilities and composition of each committee should be defined clearly within the consortium agreement.
- **Recommendation:** 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.

*Example: The BAES governance structure consists of an Academic Steering Committee, in charge of the coordination and implementation of the programme; a Programme Board to decide on all academic and educational aspects; an Administrative Committee to discuss all administrative and technical issue, a Student Committee as a Consultative Body as well as a Supervisory Council, consisting of Vice-Rectors, to oversee the overall functioning and sustainability of the programme.*

### f) Resources and financial agreements

Funding is a crucial issue for the success and long-term sustainability of joint programmes. As financial models as well as regulations for tuition fees vary across universities depending on the structure of the higher education system in the respective country, compromises (respecting national/regional legislations) need to be found.

- **Recommendation:** A good practice to overcome this challenge is to start with calculating the effective full costs of the entire programme, which can help institutions decide on their financial contribution, consider scholarship schemes as well as highlight needs for external funding.

*Example: The Una Europa Bachelor in European Studies implemented a single fee policy, where EEA students and non-EEA students pay a different amount. The exact amount of fees was calculated 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*

### g) Joint internal quality assurance

Educational quality and continuous improvement of joint degree programmes must be a priority. To this end, the Una Europa partner universities have developed an internal quality assurance strategy, which builds on the existing structures within the partner universities to the maximum extent and follows three core principles: verified trust, the principle of subsidiarity and the principle of core practices.

- **Recommendation:** Development of a joint quality assurance strategy and associated 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 university.

*Learn more about Una Europa's quality assurance approach for joint programmes in the Publication 'Quality Assurance in the context of a European University: a lean and trust-based approach for joint programmes'.*

### h) IT infrastructure

A new generation of joint programmes needs to be underpinned by state-of-the-art IT infrastructure. In Una Europa, we believe in investing in the interoperability and connection of existing learning management platforms, rather than the creation of new structures. The Una Europa IT for Education and Teaching and Learning clusters of the Una Europa Flexible Support Services are currently looking into the support structures for the creation of virtual and blended learning spaces, making use of existing infrastructure.

## 2. Translating our overarching educational principles in the programme and courses

### a) Integration of education and research at undergraduate level

Una Europa Joint Bachelor programmes are research-based and facilitate the introduction of research at undergraduate level. Via the **Research Initiation Module (RIM)**, students are provided with a strong basis for understanding state-of-the-art research methods and develop different conceptual, analytical and transversal skills. Students do not only learn to understand different scientific methods from the very beginning of their studies but also learn to apply the right strategies and processes in an international and interdisciplinary environment. They additionally learn to conduct research via various challenge-based learning activities, project work and other active pedagogies.

*Example: The Research Initiation Module in the Una Europa Joint Bachelor in European Studies takes a multidisciplinary approach and is divided into three main mandatory courses: Qualitative and Quantitative Methods, Research Track I and Research Track II at a combined 20 ECTS. The courses within the research-initiation module will be taught by professors from different Una Europa partner universities and will bring together students from various institutions.*

### b) International and multilingual teaching and learning environment

Una Europa Joint Bachelor programmes are truly international at their core: students form part of an international cohort of students, who interact with each other across cultures, languages and institutions in physical, hybrid and virtual spaces. The programmes offer both unprecedented levels of physical mobility to two or more destinations across Europe, while also encouraging additional short-term and blended mobility opportunities. Furthermore, the programmes develop blended and virtual learning spaces, based on the latest technologies. Together, this will allow students to immerse themselves in different European cultures and develop intercultural awareness as well as civic and global skills that are high in demand both in national, European and international settings. Students also have the unique opportunity to learn languages and to take courses in different languages, depending on their language skills.

*Example: The Joint Bachelor in European Studies not only includes embedded mobility of 18 months but also offers additional short-term and blended mobility opportunities, including a compulsory winter school as well as opportunities for internships across Europe.*

### 3. Accreditation of your joint programme

Joint programmes should be accredited via the **European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes**, in instances where an external accreditation at programme level is required. Ideally, the European Approach procedure will be conducted via **one accreditation agency registered in EQAR**, which coordinates and consults with other accreditation agencies in the relevant countries, if necessary. However, in practice, a number of countries across the EHEA have not yet fully implemented the European Approach and still require their universities to undergo additional national accreditation procedures.

- **Recommendation:** At the start of the conceptualisation phase, a comprehensive overview of the quality assurance processes for joint degrees at all relevant institutions, outlining the exact regulations which need to be followed by each university, should be compiled by the consortium.

*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). However, some partner universities had to undergo additional national accreditation procedures to satisfy national quality assurance requirements.*

For more in-depth information related to the development of Una Europa Joint Bachelor programmes, please refer to the [comprehensive Bachelor format](#).



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