

# GUIDANCE FOR THE ORGANIZATION OF JOINT PROGRAMMES

This document serves as guidance for academic and administrative employees of the faculties at Charles University who seek to implement a study programme organized in cooperation with a foreign higher education institution. The instructions are focused primarily on the procedural aspect and on specifying an administrative procedure for communication with the Rectorate of Charles University.

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## INTRODUCTION

Study programmes implemented in cooperation with a foreign higher education institution are a tool used to strengthen academic internationalization, in particular scientific cooperation and student mobility, and they are being employed more and more frequently for this purpose. As the development of these programmes has become one of the strategic areas of activities of Charles University, we have prepared these instructions which are intended primarily for academic and administrative faculty employees interested in this form of cooperation with foreign institutions. The instructions summarize the formal steps (with regard to the Rectorate of Charles University) to be followed to put such a programme into practice, from the first stages of preparation to the final successful accreditation. Every international programme implemented on the campus of Charles University must of course fulfil all criteria and requirements applied to standard domestic programmes unless the regulations codifying the individual aspects of study programmes state otherwise.

The individual faculties are fully responsible for the funding of these programmes, and the operation of these programmes as a university-wide activity is supported by contributions and subsidies for the educational activities of Charles University. Given the high administrative and staffing requirements for the implementation of these programmes, it is recommended to apply for grant funding offered through public competitions (the most important being the Erasmus Mundus programme) where possible.

Based on the circumstances described above, it is clear that the implementation of programmes organized in cooperation with one or more foreign higher education institutions means greater demand for contractual arrangements for said cooperation. This usually involves a whole set of documents without which the given cooperation cannot be put in place. The list below specifies several of these necessary documents, and, at the same time, summarizes the main issues which need to be established – naturally in cooperation with the foreign partners – in the preparation of these study programmes.

## TYPES OF DOCUMENTS

**Memorandum of cooperation:** A short document, mainly of a declarative nature, by which a group of higher education institutions together indicate their willingness to commence preparing the implementation of a joint programme. This document is usually the first one to be drawn up and signed.

**Grant application:** If a group of higher education institutions seeks grant support for the implementation of a joint study programme, it is necessary to apply for the selected funds in a competitive process, and this in itself requires relatively demanding administrative preparation. If the grant support is successfully obtained, the grant provider, as a rule, requires the signing of a grant agreement which sets out in detail the conditions for the use of the allocated support and possibly specifies the characteristics of the programme to be prepared.

**Study programme agreement (or consortium agreement):** An essential document usually dealing with the implementation parameters of a legal nature (patents, copyright, dispute resolution, sharing of personal data, etc.) and those relating to study issues (curricula, grade converters, admissions procedure, parameters of defences, and state final examinations, etc.).

**Form of the diploma and diploma supplement:** This essential document must either be a part of the study programme agreement or constitute an appendix to it. Agreeing on this is one of the most important points of partnership negotiations and, in addition to supervision by the Department for the Quality of Education and Accreditation, it falls primarily under the responsibility of the Documents, Registers and Recognition of Foreign Degrees Office (Student Affairs Department). A diploma the general form and structure of which have not been confirmed in advance by the Rector of Charles University may not be submitted for signature to the Rector and handed over to the graduate.

**Study programme proposal (so-called accreditation):** The procedure of applying for an “accreditation” is no different in its outcome to the accreditation procedure of all study programmes at Charles University, except that it must include some additional information and a concluded study programme agreement (i.e., signed by all partners) as an appendix. The Department for the Quality of Education and Accreditation acts as the supervisor of this procedure for all study programmes from the moment of their official submission to the Rectorate of Charles University, through their referral to the Internal Evaluation Board and then to the relevant panel, and their subsequent evaluation.

## APPROVAL PROCEDURE

The approval procedure for all documents presented by the relevant departments of the Rectorate of Charles University is as follows:

### I. Consultation

During this stage, the faculty employees receive information and guidance (primarily from the employees of the Department for the Quality of Education and Accreditation), the main objective of which is to contribute to the finalization of one or more of the document types mentioned above. From the point of view of the faculty employees, it is important already at this stage to provide all the relevant information which could influence both the course of the accreditation procedure and its form (e.g., the intention to apply for a particular grant, etc.).

### II. Review

- a) Department for the Quality of Education and Accreditation and Student Affairs Department

This part of the preparation of the joint programme will take place as soon as the faculty employees finalize one of the necessary documents (grant application, memorandum of cooperation, study programme agreement, study programme proposal) and submit it to the Rectorate of Charles University for review. This process is no longer merely informal and involves the standardized submission of documents to the Rectorate of Charles University. The documents must always be sent through the records management system to the Department for the Quality of Education and Accreditation, which will then comment on the documents (either in the form of a revision or in the form of comments), gather the opinions of the relevant departments of the Rectorate of Charles University, and send the documents back to the faculty which will be able to compare the comments received with the opinions of the foreign partners. It is in this stage that the most challenging part of the negotiations between the faculty employees in charge and the members of the relevant departments of the Rectorate of Charles University can be expected.

**b) Main overall review**

The next stage of the review will be initiated once the faculty employees have processed the initial comments made by the Rectorate of Charles University and foreign partners and submitted another version of the given document, this time conceived as the final version (i.e., without comments, etc., the document will only indicate how the comments raised have been incorporated). In this form, the document will be submitted through the electronic records management system and pass an approval round in all relevant departments of the Rectorate of Charles University (depending on the specific type of the document), including in the Legal Department. This overall review will be performed within the standard 30-day time limit. In the case of legal discrepancies or other problematic details, further negotiations (moderated by the Department for the Quality of Education and Accreditation) with the faculty employees must take place, and only after the final review by all the relevant departments of the Rectorate of Charles University (and finally returning back to the Department for the Quality of Education and Accreditation) can the document be approved.

**c) Final review before signing**

The main review will be followed by yet another review when the document is submitted for signing. The purpose of this review (which is within the responsibility of the Department for the Quality of Education and Accreditation) is primarily to check that the version submitted is identical to the one resulting from the main review.

### **III. Submission to the Rector for signature**

After the given document has passed the approval review described above, it can be submitted to the Rector for signature. As the Legal Department also reviews and approves the documents during the main review stage (within the electronic records management system), the agreements are again submitted to the Rector for signature by the Department for the Quality of Education and Accreditation. The documents to be signed should be submitted in analogue form, whereupon they will be sent by internal mail after having been be filed in the electronic

records management system; the documents should be accompanied by a cover letter containing a brief justification of the request for signature; this letter is signed by the Dean or Vice-Dean of the faculty concerned.

## ADMINISTRATIVE PART

The administration of the programmes does not end, however, with the successful ratification of the documents described above which represents the authorization to implement the given study programme (in the vast majority of areas of education, it is issued by the Internal Evaluation Board of Charles University as part of the granted institutional accreditation). After the approval by the Internal Evaluation Board (or National Accreditation Bureau), the following steps are necessary:

- To assign the appropriate parameters to the approved programme or to create these parameters in the electronic system; first, the specific parameter of the inter-university study (the so-called “MUS”), and second, to assign to it the specific foreign higher education institutions with which the programme has been accredited. Ideally, this activity should not be carried out by the faculty employees – the collective of partner universities is based on the accredited material and it is assigned by the staff of the Rectorate of Charles University.
- The study programme agreement, study programme proposal (accreditation), and grant agreement (possibly other documents) must of course not contain mutually contradictory information, and if they deal with the same issue (which is often the case), it is necessary to keep the content of the valid documents consistent by means of new versions or amendments.
- For the purposes of the evaluation of study programmes and quality assurance agenda in general, it is also necessary to record the total number of students in the joint study programme project (i.e., a number which will also include students who have never attended Charles University and are therefore not registered as students). It is not necessary to record them as students (i.e., as enrolled to study at Charles University), but only as an information indicator to increase awareness about the programme (for the purposes of study programme evaluations, etc.).
- To ensure the signing (and issuing) of documents proving the successful completion of studies (diploma and diploma supplement) in all cases of the possible involvement of Charles University (coordinator/consortium member/bilateral status) in a form corresponding to the accredited study programme proposal.
- It is also necessary to set up channels for the transfer of data which must reach the Rectorate of Charles University from the coordinators of jointly implemented programmes at Charles University – for the purpose of the organization of graduation ceremonies, or entries in the register, etc.

In the event of a substantial change in the facts which are covered by one of the documents mentioned above, e.g., a change in the consortium of universities, a fundamental change in the curriculum, etc., it is always appropriate to follow the regulations set out for the given area. In the case of a curriculum proposal one should proceed according to the Accreditation Code of Charles University, in the case of grant agreements according to the instructions of the provider, and in the case of other documents it always depends on the specific parameters and the extent of the change. For all substantial changes, it is appropriate to conclude at least an amendment regulating the new circumstances which involves the same formal procedure as when first requesting the signing of any document.