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Curriculum design
Thematic Peer Group Report

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March 2020

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Introduction

There is consensus across the European Higher Education Area that universities need to offer a student-centred learning experience and an education that not only allows students to acquire the right knowledge and skills for their future employment, but also fosters their development as active citizens that can contribute to today's (and indeed tomorrow's) society.[1] At an institutional level, the programmes offered by a higher education institution are the operationalisation of its teaching mission. Therefore, the curricula that make up those programmes need to fulfil multiple goals: to embody the institution's profile and mission; deliver the expected learning outcomes; and meet the expectations of a range of internal and external stakeholders.

The remit of this EUA Thematic Peer Group (hereafter "the group" – see Annex for further details[2]) was to explore diverse approaches to curriculum design which involve relevant stakeholders, provide a platform for exchange of good practice and discuss how these efforts eventually result in curricula that are "fit for purpose".

The results of the group's work are presented in the form of nine components of an "ideal curriculum". The components cover all stages of curriculum design: from defining graduate attributes and competences that should be acquired; ensuring a coherent curriculum with regard to the content covered as well as the teaching and assessment methods; enabling the involvement of students and external stakeholders as well as fostering collaboration and communication between teaching staff; through to encouraging continuous reflection and facilitating change.

Under each component, there is an explanation of why the group identified that point as being important, the key issues to consider when deciding which policies and practices will best serve the successful implementation of that component, as well as some ideas and practices that might provide inspiration for institutions looking to enhance their approach to curriculum design.

This report uses the following terms:

- Programme – the degree programme that a student follows, leading to a formal qualification, usually at the bachelor's or master's level. In some contexts, this term refers to a fixed set of courses covering a single discipline, whereas in other contexts it is a more flexible concept.

- Course – an individual component or module of a programme, usually covering a specific topic or theme.

- Curriculum – the elements that make up a course or programme, including the content to be covered, intended learning outcomes, and teaching and assessment methods.

Components of an ideal curriculum

I. DEFINING GRADUATE ATTRIBUTES

Why we find this important

Graduate attributes anchor a curriculum and its alumni to the values and characteristics of a particular institution. However, there is a tendency for graduate attributes to be very similar from one institution to the next, and so the challenge is to define and articulate those that are distinctive to a particular institution. As such, this exercise is linked to the broader issue of having a common understanding of the institutional mission and goals and translating those into a distinctive graduate profile.

Furthermore, the group identified that the fundamental basis of a successful curriculum is its overall coherence. Clearly defined graduate attributes provide a starting point for this and a reference point for the alignment of all further aspects of the curriculum.

Finally, distinctive and clearly articulated graduate attributes can also help students stand out when entering the world of work, boosting the reputation of the institution and creating stronger ties between the institution and its alumni. They also function as messengers of an institution's key values and should thus not be seen as a mere list of generic competences, but as a mirror of everything a specific institution deems important.

Key considerations

Graduate attributes can be defined at both institutional and programme levels. At the institutional level, the challenge, particularly for large, comprehensive universities, is making the attributes relevant across the whole institution, while still not being too generic. Tackling this requires reflection on what the unique characteristics of the institution, and its graduates, are. As such, a few short, specific attributes may be better than a long list of generic ones. At the programme level, the prominence of professional and discipline-specific attributes may depend on the extent to which a programme is oriented towards a particular profession. Programmes that are not so professionally oriented may exhibit a greater prominence of generic attributes.

Any curriculum needs to have a traceable link back to the identified graduate attributes. Graduate attributes also need to be made visible so that students can articulate and identify with them. Otherwise, they risk becoming simply "buzz words" with no connection to the curriculum.

Ideas and practices we found inspiring

- Involving external stakeholders by identifying the top employers of alumni and asking them what they value most about the institution's graduates. This puts the focus on identifying attributes that are already in existence but perhaps not articulated, rather than introducing new attributes that then need to be embedded.

- Exploring ways to make graduate attributes more visible to students. At the institutional level, this could be through a brochure presenting and explaining the distinctive profile of graduates; and at the programme level, through a curriculum map that explicitly signals which parts of the curriculum contribute to the development of each attribute. Asking students to review the curriculum to evaluate if the attributes are referenced and visible can also help identify problem areas.

II. BALANCING SUBJECT-SPECIFIC AND TRANSVERSAL COMPETENCES

Why we find this important

Institutions, students and employers are placing increasing attention on transversal, in addition to subject-specific competences, particularly as the employment market becomes more fluid. As the labour market changes, so do expectations regarding the type of transversal skills needed by graduates.

These now increasingly go beyond the typical communication and professional skills, to include internalisation of societal values such as sustainability, ethics, inclusivity and cultural sensitivity but also awareness of societal challenges such as digital transformation, climate change or aging societies.

While many students develop transversal skills through extra-curricular activities, previous work by EUA has identified that many institutions also seek to embed the development of these skills into the curriculum, in order to engage with all students[3].

However, when deciding on the competences to be covered, the challenge is likely to be what to leave out, rather than what to put in, both for subject-specific and transversal competences. Therefore, when building fit-for-purpose curricula, institutions need to balance these needs and view them as complementary rather than competing. This also promotes the need to view a curriculum holistically so to avoid duplication and overlap.

Key considerations

As with the graduate attributes, there is a risk of lacking imagination when it comes to identifying transversal skills, or of defining a long and ultimately unmanageable list of very specific competences. Institutions should consider focusing on a few priorities that resonate with the institutional profile, the graduate attributes, and the specific programme.

Some competences are required in order to study successfully either in terms of academic skills, or in terms of having the requisite knowledge to progress. Others are more relevant for life after graduating. This difference will have an impact on the point in the curriculum at which they are addressed.

With regard to transversal skills, it is important to address them in practice, not just list them on paper. For example, many institutions aim to produce reflective and critical thinking graduates; however, on close inspection, these skills are not specifically taught or assessed as part of a degree programme. Furthermore, attaining and assessing transversal competences should be embedded into the curriculum, not covered in stand-alone courses. However, the group identified a particular challenge in the general lack of any common benchmark for assessing the attainment of transversal skills.

Ideas and practices we found inspiring

- Asking alumni, through surveys or focus groups, which competences developed through their programme they found to be most valuable in their post-university life, and which they have found themselves to be lacking. This can prompt reflection not just on whether a programme is meeting its stated aims, but also whether the aims are fit-for-purpose in the first place.

- Mapping both the subject-specific and transversal skills across the curriculum and identifying specific "control points" at which they are assessed. Combining the assessments of the two skill types can help to reduce the assessment burden for staff and students and better reflect real-life application of skills and knowledge. Team skills, for example, are not acquired by letting students work in groups unsupervised, but might require a suitable design, including peer feedback. There could also be an opportunity to assess generic competences gained through extra-curricular activities.

III. ENSURING CURRICULUM COHERENCE

Why we find this important

An "ideal curriculum" is more than the sum of its parts. The group identified that coherence needs to be found from two perspectives. Firstly, constructive alignment supports building courses in which there is a clear link between the course goals and intended learning outcomes, and teaching and assessment methods. Secondly, components of a programme have to fit together across its duration for each student. As such, a programme should not be viewed as a basket of courses but as a logical and progressive selection with a clear "golden thread" tying everything together. This becomes more challenging in programmes with a high percentage of optional courses, or in institutions that permit very flexible study paths.

The group noted that, if taken seriously, this approach to curriculum design requires a high degree of cooperation and communication to ensure that the narrative is coherent from the perspective of both staff and students. It also relies on an understanding of curriculum design as an ongoing process rather than a one-time action. Curricula are not static and therefore constant review and adjustment are needed in order to maintain coherence even if individual teachers or courses may change.

Key considerations

The starting point for curriculum coherence is to ensure that all elements of the curriculum link back to the intended learning outcomes for the programme as a whole, including references to the defined graduate attributes. Curriculum mapping can be a useful approach, linking and cross-referencing the activities and courses related to each intended learning outcome, competence and attribute. Digital technologies offer options to facilitate this and make it visible for staff and students alike. However, the group noted that it is challenging to make this useful and visible in practice rather than being a theoretical exercise.

Many actors may be involved in curriculum design, but there needs to be dedicated staff with overall responsibility for ensuring that all elements of the programme fit together, even when individual teachers take responsibility for their own courses. Real coherence can be best achieved when proactive communication and cooperation between teachers of different courses is encouraged and supported, in addition to oversight from a programme director. This follows the reasoning that the better the understanding that teachers have of what is being covered in other courses, the more relevant they can make their own, as well as avoiding overlaps. In this vein, curriculum coherence also encompasses issues around workload and scheduling.

Ideas and practices we found inspiring

- Considering moving away from the traditional approach of individual courses and using multi-disciplinary problem-based projects instead. This reflects more realistically the integrated approach that is required in working life and can reduce some of the restrictions that come with relying on courses as the administrative unit for delivering a curriculum.

- Putting curriculum coherence at the centre of a programme evaluation. By bringing together different actors with a stake in the programme and letting them compare their views, institutions can generate valuable impulses for further development and foster a shared understanding of the curriculum's core identity.

IV. TAKING THE "HIDDEN CURRICULUM" INTO ACCOUNT

Why we find this important

The concept of the hidden curriculum refers to learning processes and outcomes that go beyond those explicitly defined and intended in the curriculum. This includes the values and norms that are transmitted implicitly through the material covered, the behaviour of the teachers, and the set-up of the learning environment.

Each student will experience their own version of the hidden curriculum influenced by their own experiences. However, the group discussed that it is important for an institution to pay attention to the informal and intangible aspects of the curriculum in order to identify unintended messages. Such reflection is also an opportunity to identify ways of embedding aspects that are important to the institution but are not part of the formal teaching, such as internationalisation, inclusiveness and societal relevance.

Consulting students on their experiences will support institutions in identifying any mismatch between teaching intentions and student perception. Furthermore, raising awareness of the concept of the hidden curriculum among teaching staff can prompt them to reflect on their own behaviours and assumptions, and how these are presented through their teaching.

Key considerations

Some aspects of the hidden curriculum may happen organically and depend on individual student experiences. However, some values such as diversity or internationalisation[4] can be identified and fostered within the curriculum design framework in order for them to be more visible.

Students may have a very different perception of their hidden curriculum to that identified by staff. Therefore, it is important to get student and alumni input and feedback. Students in particular can also contribute to co-creating a curriculum that makes certain intangible aspects more visible. As a first step, this approach can be implemented quite quickly by asking students to suggest what they perceive to be relevant case examples to illustrate the points covered in the classroom.

Finally, it should be recognised that the hidden curriculum may also be transmitted through extra-curricular activities as well as informal staff-student or student-student interaction. It is important to give space for these experiences.

Ideas and practices we found inspiring

- Using students (or student interns) to review the curriculum for specific elements, such as inclusion or relevance to society. To go even further in getting a fresh perspective, students from a different department or faculty could be asked to carry out the exercise, or recent alumni as they have an overview of the whole programme.

- Reviewing the curriculum plan specifically with regard to the language used in it, as this transmits the underlying values, assumptions and prejudices that could be brought into the classroom.

V. AIMING FOR DIDACTIC VARIETY AND EFFECTIVENESS

Why we find this important

Variety in itself is not a value; however, different skills, competences and content require different approaches for students to learn most effectively. Teachers should have a variety of pedagogical options at their disposal in order to choose the most appropriate approach for each context as well as to accommodate different learning styles and needs. This also concerns assessment, as there is little point in implementing student-centred approaches to teaching, if the assessment methods are not also aligned.[5]

Aiming for didactic variety also pushes institutions to offer sufficient training and support to teachers, ideally also including opportunity for experimentation, innovation and sharing practice. Lack of time and motivation to participate in pedagogical training is a frequently cited barrier for professional development.

Institutions can incentivise teaching staff and demonstrate the importance of the institutional teaching mission by linking teaching more closely to career progression.[6] This reflects the discourse around parity of esteem between teaching and research that is currently found in many national policy fora as well as at the European level.[7]

Key considerations

The choice of didactics should not only be the remit of the teacher, it should also be linked to the overall course design and its place within the programme so to ensure coherence. This points again to the need to view programmes holistically, not just in terms of the content, but also in terms of the teaching and assessment methods.[8]

The effectiveness of varying teaching and assessment approaches is also linked to scheduling and workload. The group identified that traditionally, there is a tendency to cram many large assessments into a short time at the end of a term. This may in fact be counter-productive, for both students who find their workload heavily weighted within a short timeframe, and for staff who also have to condense all their marking and assessment work.

Ideas and practices we found inspiring

- Reflecting on opportunities to combine assessments so that one exam or project serves to assess two or more courses. This requires a high level of planning and coordination initially, but ultimately can reduce the workload for staff and students.

- Organising "programme labs" in the form of a faculty retreat, where the teaching staff of a programme can have a one or two-day workshop on didactic aspects of the programme, learn from each other and also move towards curriculum coherence from a didactic point of view.

VI. INVOLVING PERSPECTIVES FROM OUTSIDE

Why we find this important

Bringing in perspectives from external stakeholders can enhance the content of curricula and help to ensure their relevance to the outside world. It can also help to ensure that programmes better reflect ongoing political, economic and social developments.

Stakeholders might be involved at different stages of developing and implementing a curriculum and at differing levels of intensity. For example, external partners may be invited to join advisory panels or peer review teams for planning or evaluating programmes. In some contexts it may be relevant for stakeholders to take a more active role in implementing the curriculum, by teaching in the classroom or by offering internships.

As with any form of stakeholder engagement, it is only worthwhile if the opportunities in place allow them to make a genuine, rather than a token, contribution. This also requires (and in turn can further foster) a culture of openness to external opinions.

Key considerations

It is important to identify which perspectives are most important and relevant for the programme in question, and what sort of involvement makes sense. For example, the extent of employer involvement in curriculum design, implementation and review will depend on the type of programme, with greater input expected for more professionally oriented programmes.

In general, there is a risk of relying on a small set of external partners to give input to curriculum design. It is important for an institution to try and get a variety of perspectives, including from peers or experts that are not already familiar with the programme, or even the institution, so as to take advantage of a fresh set of eyes. The key is to find someone who is able and willing to challenge assumptions and give criticism.

Finally, it is important to combine external perspectives with internal ones rather than segregating their input and dealing with it separately.

Ideas and practices we found inspiring

- Thinking beyond the immediate external environment when identifying relevant perspectives: stakeholders can also come from non-profit organisations, interest groups, or academia itself. This might mean bringing in other academics in the same disciplinary field but from another country, or someone from a different discipline. This may also help to overcome an often-seen reluctance to get input from colleagues in the same field.

- Introducing possibilities for co-creation of part of the curriculum with external partners, for example through service learning, brings in different perspectives not just in terms of input to curriculum planning and delivery, but also in terms of expanding the range of views and experiences to which students are exposed.

VII. ENABLING STUDENT PARTICIPATION

Why we find this important

The group identified two main strands to student participation as a component of an "ideal curriculum". First, it reflects the concept of student-centred learning, a central and distinctive feature of educational policy and practice in the European Higher Education Area.[9] At the heart of student-centred learning is the need for

students to take responsibility for their own learning, but in order for this to happen, institutions need to provide a framework of policies and practices that facilitate this.

Second, it covers the involvement of student representatives in relevant decision-making bodies. Students provide a different perspective to issues such as curriculum content and teaching and assessment methods, often bringing in ideas or concerns that would not be identified by staff. As such, institutions should seek to involve students in all the components of an "ideal curriculum" that are mentioned in this report.

These two strands foster a culture of participation and co-ownership in which students are listened to and supported in steering their own development.

Key considerations

While student-centred learning is a frequently mentioned term in European policy documents, previous work by EUA has identified that many institutions lack a common understanding of what this means in their own context. In practice, the concept covers a range of issues including strategies and policies, flexible learning paths and curriculum design, teaching methods and pedagogical training, student assessment, and student services and learning resources[10]. Consideration of these tangible aspects can support the shift of mindset and culture that is necessary for a student-centred learning environment.

It is important that the inclusion of student representatives in curriculum committees or other decision-making bodies is not limited to treating them as a channel of communication between staff and the rest of the student body, but as an approach to genuine involvement. However, to do this, student representatives are likely to need training in the aspects of institutional work to which they are contributing. This can be challenging as many of them are only in the role for one year and do not have sufficient time to build on their initial experiences. Longer mandates or full-time sabbatical positions are two possibilities to tackle this.

Genuine student involvement also relies on teachers being open to students' suggestions and proactive in using approaches for co-creation. In this way, students are partners in the process and contribute to finding solutions rather than just raising complaints or concerns. Beyond this, staff need to be active in reaching all students, not just the appointed representatives.

Ideas and practices we found inspiring

- Setting out a "contract" between students and staff at the start of each course to establish the expectations on each side. This supports transparency with regard to the content to be covered as well as the teaching and assessment approaches, fosters students taking responsibility for their own learning, and reaches all students rather than just formal representatives. The "contract" can be discussed at the start of the first class to ensure that everyone has a common understanding of the goals and expectations.

- Exploring ways to involve students in curriculum review and enhancement, beyond questionnaires. This could include focus groups or open discussion sessions between staff and students at the end of each semester or academic year. The key is to instigate a dialogue rather than just collecting feedback.

VIII. FOSTERING CONTINUOUS EXCHANGE, COMMUNICATION AND COLLABORATION AMONG TEACHERS

Why we find this important

Communication and collaboration enhance the quality of curricula and teaching in several ways: by integrating research processes and outputs into the curriculum, thus creating and sustaining a meaningful connection between research and teaching; ensuring broad participation in the development and review of programmes; providing opportunities for peer learning for continuous professional development; and developing and disseminating university policies.

A coherent curriculum depends on extensive communication and collaboration being part of the institutional culture. Institutions are increasingly moving away from the traditional view of teaching as an individual responsibility, but this requires a change in culture, not just practice. Having a framework for collaboration and peer learning is an important step towards a common understanding of teaching as a shared and collaborative responsibility.

Key considerations

There is a whole web of communication lines to consider and foster, including: between different levels of organisation; between various actors involved in a particular programme, including between teachers and support staff; between staff and students; between teachers in different disciplinary fields; and between internal and external stakeholders. Each line might need a different approach to be effective.

Communication and exchange do not necessarily happen organically. There needs to be a framework in place for planned and regular meetings between and across all levels. This helps to foster a culture of collaboration where people are proactive in communicating beyond the formal meetings.

The group identified that the institutional leadership has an important role in setting an example in the way in which they communicate. Here in particular, the value of face-to-face dialogue should not be forgotten; communication is far more than just the dissemination of information.

Ideas and practices we found inspiring

- Drawing inspiration from the research community and holding teaching retreats, away days or seminars. This can help to foster a culture of communication and exchange in an environment that gives space for creative thinking and experimentation.

- Moving away from the dominant "solitary" way of developing courses and teaching them. Teaming teachers up (maybe also together with learning designers and administrators) for developing a new course or encouraging team teaching by making sure that the extra effort is rewarded (instead of just dividing the teaching hours by two) might even help to create a stronger collaborative culture.

IX. ENCOURAGING PERMANENT REFLECTION AND CREATING OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHANGE

Why we find this important

A fundamental part of keeping curricula fit-for purpose is to ensure sufficient space for review and reflection as well as capacity to act on that information. Implicitly this is about quality assurance, but covers many actions that might not be specifically labelled as such. Importantly, reflection should not be limited to the moments stipulated by external review cycles. European policies put the primary responsibility for the quality of education firmly with the institution.[11] In practice, external reviews check that an institution has certain internal elements in place, but they vary as to how deeply they examine the effectiveness of these elements. Taking advantage of the synergies between internal and external review processes helps to reduce the risk of reflection and revision becoming a bureaucratic burden.

This is also true of stakeholder involvement. Engaging internal and external partners in aspects of curriculum review where they can give a relevant input, and signalling that the input is heard and acted upon helps to embed a mindset and culture of continuous improvement.

Key considerations

Reflection needs to cover all the elements of an "ideal curriculum" mentioned in this report, taking clearly defined goals (at institutional, programme and course levels) as the starting point, and ensuring the results feed back into further development. Specifically, a programme review needs to cover all the elements that contribute to making a curriculum coherent. At the department level, elements to cover in a self-evaluation include: relevance and appropriateness of learning outcomes; alignment of learning outcomes, teaching methods and assessment; student workload, progression and completion (and perhaps also employment); and the overall student experience. The group identified that one particular challenge connected to evaluating whether learning outcomes are being met is that, particularly at the programme level, they are not formulated clearly enough to be assessed. An internal programme review is an opportunity to scrutinise this in the context of a broader evaluation.

A comprehensive approach to reflection and change needs to be fostered at all levels, including individuals (teachers and students), teams connected to a particular course or programme, and up to the overall institutional level. This requires collaboration between different university actors, including teaching staff, centres for learning and teaching, quality assurance units and students.

Importantly, the tools and methodology used for the review need to be fit-for-purpose so as to genuinely provide useful information for further development, and the activities need to be carried out by people with relevant expertise.

Ideas and practices we found inspiring

- Offering a reduction in teaching hours to staff working on a redesign of a curriculum on the basis of the outcomes of review and reflection, which allows them to dedicate the necessary time to doing it comprehensively.

- Fostering a culture of continuous reflection by emphasising and facilitating the use of Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) methods.[12] Teaching staff generally have elaborate research expertise, yet this is often not applied to their teaching efforts. A SoTL culture may promote the same continuous reflection on appropriateness, validity and reliability as staff are accustomed to for their research.

Conclusions

This report seeks to cover some of the key issues that underpin effective curriculum design. In doing so, the members of the Thematic Peer Group chose to concentrate on the components that they viewed as being important for an "ideal curriculum" rather than the challenges and restrictions in implementation. These components cover the full cycle of the curriculum design process, from identifying the expected characteristics of the graduates, through specific aspects of implementation, on to reflection and enhancement of the curriculum. However, it is important to note that no component can be viewed in isolation. For example, the principle of student involvement is addressed as one component, but also runs through all others, as does the need for communication and exchange.

The recurrent theme that came up throughout the discussions during the group's meetings was "coherence". Keeping this in mind, the group suggests that the starting point for curriculum design should be to anchor the curriculum in its institutional environment. As such, there is no one-size-fits-all solution, and translating the ideas provided in this report into specific policies and processes requires significant reflection on what will and will not work in each institutional context. However, it is hoped that this report provides some inspiration that can be relevant for institutions across the European Higher Education Area and perhaps even beyond.

Annex

EUA LEARNING & TEACHING THEMATIC PEER GROUPS

As part of its work on learning and teaching, EUA carries out activities with the aim to engage with university communities in charge of learning and teaching. One of these activities is coordinating the work of a set of Thematic Peer Groups. The groups consist of universities selected through a call for participation to:

- discuss and explore practices and lessons learnt in organising and implementing learning and teaching in European universities, and to

- contribute to the enhancement of learning and teaching by identifying key recommendations on the selected theme.

The 2019 Thematic Peer Groups, active from March 2019 to February 2020, invited participating universities to peer-learning and exchange of experience, while at the same time they contributed to EUA's policy work as the voice of European universities in policy debates, such as the Bologna Process.

Each group was chaired by one university and supported by a coordinator from the EUA secretariat. The groups met three times to discuss key challenges related to the theme, how to address the challenges through innovative practices and approaches, and what institutional policies and processes support the enhancement in learning and teaching. In addition, the groups were welcome to discuss any other issue that was relevant to the theme. Outside the three meetings, the groups were free to organise their work independently. Members of the groups also attended a final workshop, where they had the opportunity to meet and discuss the outcomes of other groups and address synergies. The workshop was hosted by Utrecht University in the Netherlands on 12 February 2020 and followed by the 2020 European Learning & Teaching Forum from 13-14 February, where focus groups based on the work of the Thematic Peer Groups were organised to obtain feedback on their results.

Composition of the Thematic Peer Group 'Curriculum design''
(starting with the group chair and by alphabetical order of the country name)

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- University of Turku, Finland: Petri Sjöblom, Joni Kajander (student)

- University of Turin, Italy: Lorenza Operti, Elizabeth Armstrong, Samin Sedghi Zadeh (student)

- Utrecht University, the Netherlands: Maarten van der Smagt, Antoon van Beek (student)

- University of Primorska, Slovenia: Sonja Rutar, Sonja Čotar Konrad, Matija Jenko (student)

- Polytechnic University of Valencia, Spain: Eduardo Vendrell Vidal, Andrea Paricio Henares (student)

- Ankara University, Turkey: Mehmet Rifat Vural, Ayşen Apaydin, Sena Tırpan (student)

- Queen Mary University of London, United Kingdom: Stephanie Marshall, Redwan Shahid (student)

- University of Sheffield, United Kingdom: Wyn Morgan, Brendan Stone

- Group coordinator: Anna Gover, Programme Manager, EUA

Endnotes

1   Cf. Paris Communiqué, Paris, May 25 2018, http://bit.ly/2Jl2znt (accessed 02/12/2019).

2   The group would like to thank EUA, Queen Mary University of London, and the University of Turin for hosting their three meetings. The group is also grateful to the members of the other Learning & Teaching Thematic Peer Groups as well as to participants at the 2020 European Learning and Teaching Forum (hosted by Utrecht University, 13-14 February 2020), for their feedback and input.

3   Further discussion on fostering the development of transversal and professional competences can be found in Loukkola, T. and Dakovic, G. (eds.), 2017, Report from the thematic peer groups in 2017. Learning & Teaching Paper #1, (Brussels, EUA), pp. 9-13. http://bit.ly/2Jdiltc (accessed 02/122019).

4   Further discussion on embedding internationalisation into the curriculum can be found in Peppi, T., Grönlund, A. and Peterbauer, H. (eds.), forthcoming, Internationalisation in learning and teaching: Thematic Peer Group Report. (Brussels, EUA).

5   Cf. Gover, A., Loukkola, T, and Peterbauer, H., 2019, Student-centred learning: approaches to quality assurance, (Brussels, EUA), pp. 12-13. http://bit.ly/2IHCiVY (accessed 02/12/2019)

6   For further reading on this topic, see te Pas, S. and Zhang, T. (eds.), 2019, Career paths in teaching: Thematic Peer Group Report. Learning & Teaching Paper #2, (Brussels, EUA). http://bit.ly/38NEcyR (accessed 02/12/2019) and McIntyre-Bhatty, T. and Bunscu, L. (eds.), 2019, Continuous development of teaching competences: Thematic Peer Group Report. Learning & Teaching Paper #3. (Brussels, EUA). http://bit.ly/33g1Ra7 (accessed 02/12/2019).

7   Loukkola, T. and Peterbauer, H., 2019, Towards a cultural shift in learning and teaching. Learning & Teaching Paper #6, (Brussels, EUA), p. 6. http://bit.ly/2Q5yVMz (accessed 02/12/2019).

8   Further discussion on approaches to assessment can be found in Evans, C. and Bunescu, L. (eds.), forthcoming, Student assessment: Thematic Peer Group Report. (Brussels, EUA).

9   Leuven and Louvain-la-Neuve Communiqué, 28-29 April 2009, pp. 3-4. http://bit.ly/2Jl2znt (accessed 20/12/2019).

10   For a more detailed discussion of these elements see Gover, A., Loukkola, T. and Peterbauer, H., 2019, Student-centred learning: approaches to quality assurance, (Brussels, EUA). http://bit.ly/2IHCiVY (accessed 20/12/2019).

11   Standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area, 2015, (Brussels, Belgium), p. 8. http://bit.ly/2G3D134 (accessed 02/12/2019).

12   Further inspiration on SoTL approaches may be found in Emplit, P. and Zhang, T. (eds.), forthcoming, Evidence-based approaches to learning and teaching: Thematic Peer Group Report. (Brussels, EUA).

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The European University Association (EUA) is the representative organisation of universities and national rectors' conferences in 48 European countries. EUA plays a crucial role in the Bologna Process and in influencing EU policies on higher education, research and innovation. Thanks to its interaction with a range of other European and international organisations, EUA ensures that the voice of European universities is heard wherever decisions are being taken that will impact their activities.

The Association provides a unique expertise in higher education and research as well as a forum for exchange of ideas and good practice among universities. The results of EUA's work are made available to members and stakeholders through conferences, seminars, websites and publications.

This paper is one of a series of reports specifically focused on learning and teaching. It is designed to gather the knowledge and experiences of experts on the topic from across Europe. EUA's activities in learning and teaching aim at enhancing the quality and relevance of higher education provision, underline the importance of learning and teaching as a core mission and advocate for learning and teaching activities to be geared towards student learning and success.