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CIVIS QUALITY ASSURANCE FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING ACTIVITIES

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1 Purpose

CIVIS Alliance promised in its application to deliver an Internal Quality assurance for teaching and programmes (result 8.6). The Work Package Quality and Evaluation has therefore agreed to undertake the preparation of a document which will provide guidance for the design and evaluation of future CIVIS teaching and learning activities. The document will be validated by CIVIS Governance.

The approach followed by the WP contact persons of each partner university has been carried out in different subsequent steps:

- i) Identify reference framework for CIVIS according to chosen approach
- ii) Carry out a state-of-the-art analysis. Check in each institution the compliance with the European Standard Guidelines or other reference framework identified by the Task Force.
- iii) Define common requirements for CIVIS training among ESG by taking into consideration the European Universities objectives/values and the results of the state-of-the-art analysis in the consortium.
- iv) Define the process to validate and evaluate CIVIS teaching and learning activities, defining roles and responsibilities.

During the survey collection, all member universities have stated that they have implemented the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG 2015). The analysis of the state-of-the-art confirmed this and highlighted similarities in the programme design, admission procedures, information collection and the other topics of the ESG. Therefore, the same criteria will be used as common principles in this QA document.

One of the main differences, the more relevant one, concerns the relationship between ECTS and students' expected workload. In fact, some universities have discordant opinion about the relationship: some of them consider 1 ECTS = 25 h total workload (1/3 face-to-face learning), someone else says that 1,5 ECTS = full time study week (40 working hours), others 1 ECTS = 30 h total workload (6-10 h face-to-face learning).

Given this scenario, it is clear the need for a consensus about ECTS equivalence. Otherwise the recognition process of student workload among CIVIS Universities could be flawed.

For this reason, one of the points of the design of CIVIS teaching and learning activities is going to address this need, clarifying and standardizing the ECTS/workload equivalence.

During the fabric phase of CIVIS Alliance, the implementation of different results all requested the support of a comprehensive strategy to ensure the quality of joint teaching and learning activities:

1. CIVIS Open Online Courses
2. Single Learning Activities
3. CIVIS Modules
4. CIVIS Programmes
5. European Degrees

The vast array of different programmes set up as a result of the bottom-up approach adopted during the fabric phase also resulted in the shared perception of the need for the systematisation of the description of the different types of joint teaching and learning activities which have been developed and delivered thanks to the cooperation of the CIVIS academic community. This effort resulted in the preparation of a **CIVIS Matrix Description document (see ANNEX)** whose content was developed by University of Bucharest within WP7 Teaching excellence activity and will form the basis for the identification of the categories of programmes, which will be included in the CIVIS Quality for teaching and learning activities policy document.

In addition to this and with a view to avoiding the duplication of QA systems of each partner university, the policy will be applied only to programmes that are not already part of the partners' own QA regular academic offer but have instead been developed within the CIVIS Alliance scope of action (e.g. CIVIS Summer/Winter Schools, Courses inside Single Learning Activities).

The aim of the Quality Assurance System (QAS) is to guide and codify the methods through which the CIVIS Alliance aims to achieve its goals, and to establish a series of necessary actions to implement ongoing improvement.

The QAS is the set of activities carried out in order to ensure that the quality goals are met. It is also a system through which the CIVIS Governing Bodies implement their own quality assurance of joint teaching and learning activities and contemplates planning, implementation, observation (monitoring) and control actions. These actions are aimed at ensuring that:

- each CIVIS actor can be fully aware of his or her tasks and carry them out in a competent and timely manner;
- the service provided is effective;
- traces of the service are kept with appropriate documentation;
- it is possible to evaluate the results.

All processes, activities and courses implemented to reach the objectives set forth in the CIVIS's Strategic Plan must align with these standards and criteria.

2 Recipients

Quality Policies set forth in the instant document represent the CIVIS's undertaking toward:

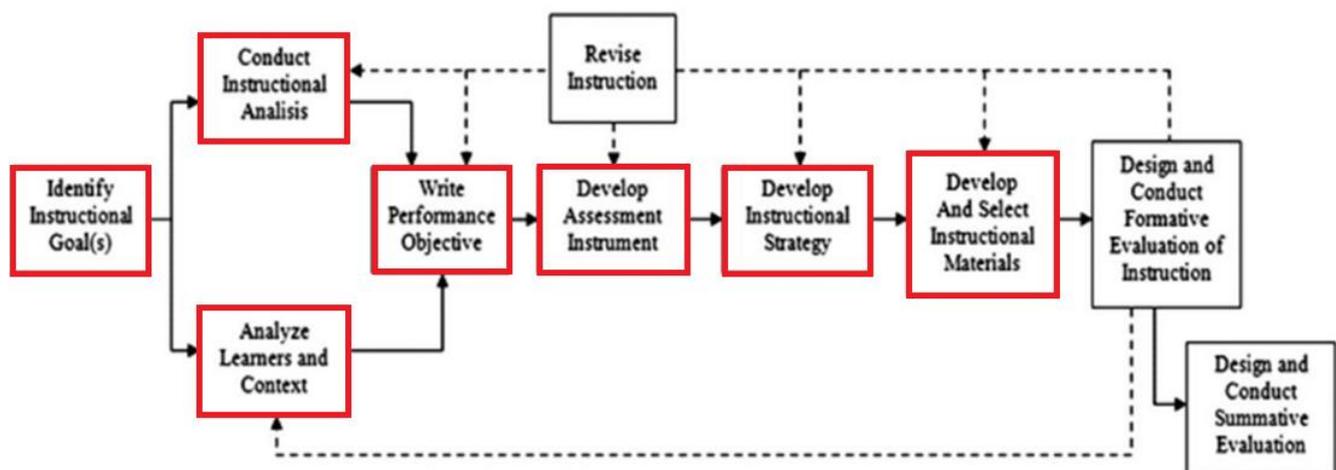
- EU and non-EU students;
- Universities personnel (instructors/teachers and technical, administrative, and library personnel);
- Stakeholders within and outside the Alliance;
- European institutions;
- any entities, institutions, universities involved in Research and Higher Education.

3 Fundamental principles

CIVIS will undertake a quality-assurance system inspired by the cycle of continuous improvement of the management system for Quality Assurance of teaching and learning activities, therefore taking all CIVIS specific activities, courses and programmes as reference subjects, consists of four interrelated processes: planning, management, assessment, improvement.

3.1 Programme design, planning of resource and teaching

The planning/design phase of CIVIS activities should follow the red steps identified inside the Systems Approach Model¹. These steps should be followed by the CIVIS Activity Organizing Committee (CAOC), that is composed by one or more academics of the partner university who arrange and plan the course and have the responsibility of the design of that specific CIVIS activity. At least one of the members of the committee should be a teacher/professor.



Identify Intended Learning Outcome(s)

The first step in the model is to determine what new knowledge and skills learners will master when they have completed the programme, expressed as outcomes. The learning outcomes may be derived from a list of outcomes, from a needs assessment, from the analysis of students' requests, or from some other requirement for new instruction. In short, the Intended learning outcome should clarify what the student should be able to perform after teaching, that couldn't be performed previously. This phase of design should follow the SOLO taxonomy from Biggs and Tang²: SOLO, which stands for the Structure of the Observed Learning Outcome, is a means of classifying learning outcomes in terms of their complexity, enabling to assess students' work in terms of its quality.

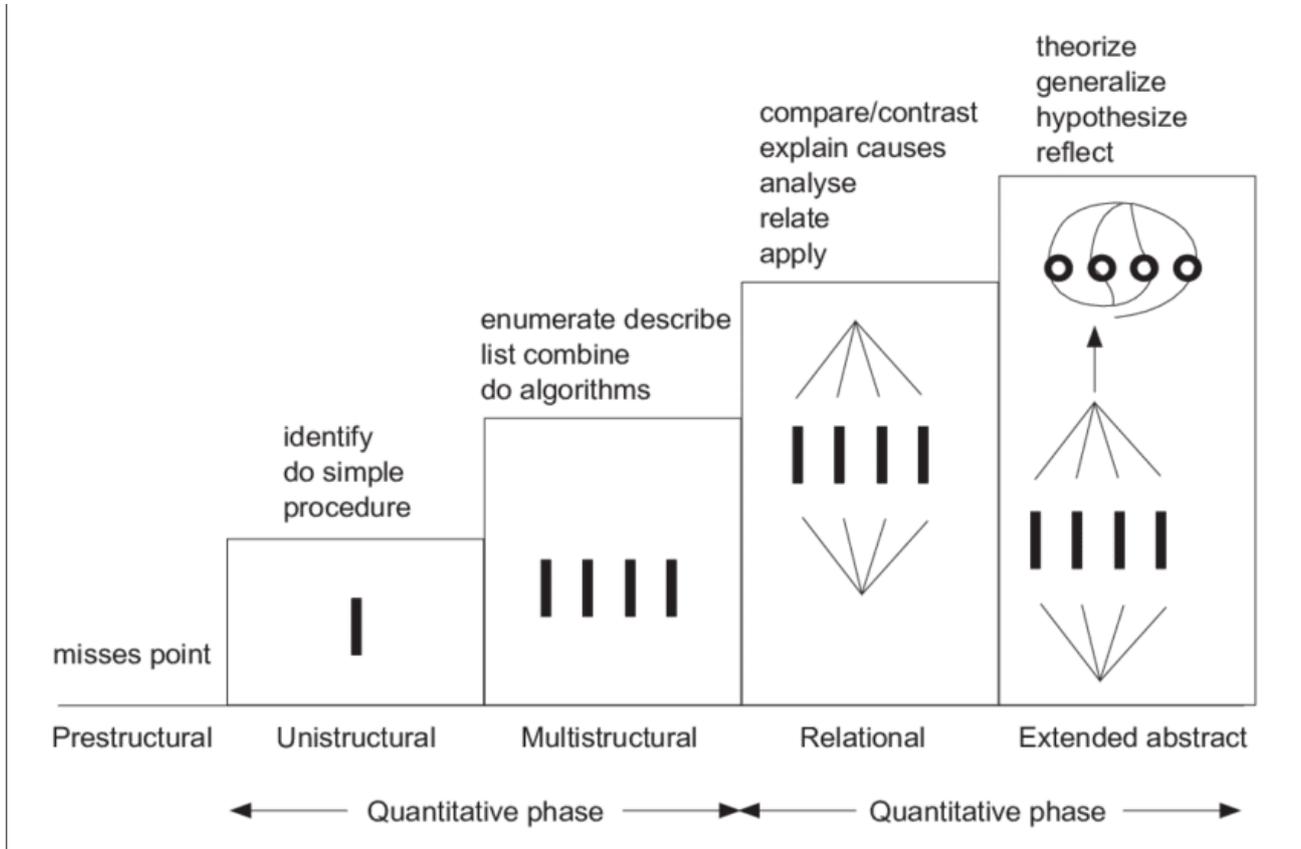
The SOLO taxonomy classifies understanding into five (5) levels:

- Prestructural: at this level the learner is missing the point
- Unistructural: pick up only one or few aspects of the task.
- Multistructural: pick up multiple unrelated points.

¹ Dick, W., Carey, L., & Carey, J. O. (2001). *The systematic design of instruction*. 6th. New York: Longmann.

² Biggs, J., & Tang, C. (2011). *Teaching for quality learning at university*. McGraw-hill education (UK).

- Relational: learn how to integrate points into a whole, presented in a logically related answer.
- Extended abstract: demonstrating an abstract and deep understanding through unexpected and yet untaught applications.



Conduct Educational Analysis

The final step in the educational analysis process is to determine what skills, knowledge, and attitudes, known as entry requirements, are needed by learners to be successful in the new education. This is also relevant for the admission procedure which should be aligned with the entry requirements defined.

Students, in fact, must meet general (based on student general eligibility for CIVIS programmes) and specific (based on course type and its prerequisites) entry requirements to be eligible for CIVIS courses and programmes. Those requirements have to be clearly and transparently communicated by the teacher to interested students.

Places are offered based on eligible applicants' merit rankings defined by the teacher (who is part of the CAOC) who organises and designs the course. The teacher can evaluate students' curricula or motivation letters/essays to verify the presence of the entry requirements.

It is important that access policies, admission processes and criteria are implemented consistently and in a transparent manner, disseminated to interested students through CIVIS information channels. Induction to the institution and the programme is provided.

Should the student fail to be admitted to the programme, an appeal procedure should be in place. A complaints procedure allows student to state its dissatisfaction about the conduct of the process or those carrying it out.

Analyse Learners and Contexts

In addition to analysing the learning outcomes, as the CIVIS students belong to different universities and different countries, it is advisable for CAOC to develop a parallel analysis of the learners, the context from which they come from, and the context in which they are going to use the concepts learned. The diversity of students and their needs should be respected and attended to, especially in view of potential different cultural backgrounds of the students. Learners' current skills, preferences, and attitudes are determined along with the characteristics of the educational setting and the setting in which the skills will eventually be used.

Write Performance Objectives

Based on the educational analysis and the description of entry requirements, CAOC should write specific statements of what learners will be able to do when they complete the activity/course/programme. These statements, derived from the skills identified in the educational analysis, identify the skills to be learned and the criteria for successful performance. These performance objectives, i.e. learning outcomes, will be the basis on which the assessment of the CIVIS activity will be carried out.

Develop Examination/Evaluation Tools

Based on the objectives, CAOC develops assessments that are parallel to and that measure the learners' ability to perform what is described in the objectives. The examination regulations and the evaluation of the achieved learning outcomes should correspond with the intended learning outcomes. Major emphasis is placed on relating the kind of skills described in the objectives to the evaluation requirements.

CAOC should transparently and in advance share the students' examination /evaluation modalities that will be applied at the end of the activity.

The modalities could be of various nature, like working groups, essays, tests.

Develop Educational Strategy

Based on information from the five preceding steps, CAOC identifies a theoretically based strategy to use in the education to achieve the learning outcomes that emphasises components to foster student learning, including

- pre-instructional activities, such as stimulating motivation and focusing attention
- presentation of new content with examples and demonstrations
- active learner participation and practice with feedback on how they are doing
- follow-through activities that assess students' learning and relate the newly learned skills to real-world applications

Student Workload

It is critical in this step to clearly define the student workload from students, in terms of hours of face-to-face learning and individual studying. This should be also in line with the number of ECTS that were decided for the activity.

Please, note that the ECTS offered is mandatory information for all the activities, especially for the courses. Moreover, CAOC should design the activity taking into account that the relationship between ECTS and students' expected workload is formalised as follows:

1 ECTS = 25-30 h total student workload.

The adherence of workload with ECTS offered will be evaluated by students during the assessment phase at the end of the activity.

3.2 Management and delivery of educational activities and services for students

Universities concur, together with the CIVIS general administration, to manage the activities necessary to provide training activities (organisation of lessons, management of classrooms, laboratories and libraries) and related verification tests to the functioning of student services of inbound, inbound and outbound guidance, international mobility services, administrative services. The facilities provided should be sufficient and adequate in view of the intended learning outcomes.

Recognition and supporting documents

During this phase much attention should be put to the documentation to be issued before, and at the end of the activity with which students can prove their participation in the activity and the learning outcomes achieved and obtain recognition within their study programmes or in the labour market. These documents can vary according to the type of activity, like Transcript of Records, diplomas, CIVIS passport and badges). In all these official CIVIS documents should be clearly stated the name/s of the activity/ies to which the student participated, as well as the university that issued the activity and the ECTS awarded (and gained) by student.

This phase should ensure the curricular recognition by the home institution for all courses taken at alliance partner universities, as well as courses organised in collaborations within the alliance. In order to achieve this goal of recognizing ECTS credits from other partners, the opportunities offered by the digital campus should be exploited on pre-approval of a set of courses from CIVIS partners each semester.

3.3 Monitoring, self-assessment and evaluation

Monitoring activities are essential to the Quality Assurance process.

Following the completion of the learning activity, a series of evaluations is conducted to collect data used to identify problems with the instruction or opportunities to make the instruction better, they are summative evaluation because their purpose is to help create and improve educational processes and products.

There could be different kinds of evaluation templates, based on the combination of type of respondent (teacher or student) and activity evaluated (workshop, course, summer/winter school, programme). The main aspect to consider is that the main arguments on which the evaluation is based (e.g. Course Content and Organisation, Student Contribution, Learning Environment and Teaching Methods, Learning Resources, etc.) should be clearly standardised and shared among the CIVIS Alliance. This is useful for the collection of general data, as well as for potential comparison purposes. Data will be visible to only direct superiors, the lecturers and the students that were involved in the evaluation. Only aggregated data (anonymized) will be disseminated to a larger audience or project partners. Furthermore, it is advisable that the evaluations are digitised and gathered as part of the digital resources provided by the digital campus. Following this need, the most appropriate instrument for individual activity seems to be the survey/questionnaire with closed and open-ended questions.

3.4 Adoption of adequate measures for improvement

The final step in the design and development process of quality assurance (and the first step in a repeat cycle) is revising and improving the instruction, as well as the services offered to students. Data from the evaluations are summarised and interpreted to identify difficulties experienced by learners in achieving the learning outcomes, as well as the overall satisfaction, and to relate these difficulties to specific deficiencies in the instruction.

The data from evaluation are not simply used to revise the instruction itself, but are used to:

- re-examine the validity of the instructional analysis
- re-examine statements of performance objectives
- identify the presence of good practices, which can be replicated and disseminated in other contexts
- identify the causes of unsatisfactory results

The responsibility of the gathering and the analysis of data should be better defined in the next phase of CIVIS.

In fact, on the basis of the available data and specific considerations of each context, a future committee will be in charge of defining the action plans, aimed at improving the activities that show limits in some core or collateral aspects. The drafting of the plan also makes it possible to systematically monitor the progress of the actions planned in the previous review activities. It is advisable within this process to foresee an annual report composed by Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) in which the collected data are summarised in aggregate form, which give the overall status of educational activities carried out within CIVIS Alliance. The report should be published on all CIVIS platforms (website and social) and shared among CIVIS partners.

ANNEX 1

CIVIS Curricular Matrix

		CIVIS ACADEMIC STRUCTURES	ECTS credit points	CERTIFICATION	DELIVERY MODE	RECOGNITION	MULTI-LINGUALISM	INNOVATIVE PEDAGOGIES	
1. CIVIS OPEN ONLINE COURSES									
1.1.	REGULAR ONLINE COURSES	Faculties / Departments / Doctoral Schools	1-12	CIVIS Passport	Virtual (DE) / Blended	Full / Partial	CIVIS Languages	CIVIS IP Inventory	
1.2.	MOOCs				Virtual (DE)				
2. SINGLE LEARNING ACTIVITIES									
2.1.	WEBINARS	CIVIS Hubs	1-3	CIVIS Passport	Virtual (DE)	Full / Partial	CIVIS Languages	CIVIS IP Inventory	
2.2.	WORKSHOPS				Physical / Blended / Virtual (DE)				
2.3.	COURSES		1-12						
3. CIVIS MODULES									
3.1.	CIVIS SUMMER / WINTER SCHOOLS	CIVIS Hubs	2-10	CIVIS Passport + Transcript of Records	Physical / Blended / Virtual (DE)	Full / Partial	CIVIS Languages	CIVIS IP Inventory	
3.2.	CIVIS BOOTCAMPs								
3.3.	CIVIS MICRO-PROGRAMMES		3-15						
4. CIVIS PROGRAMMES		CIVIS Hubs	Faculties / Departments / Doctoral Schools	15-60	CIVIS Passport + Transcript of Records	Physical / Blended / Virtual (DE)	Full / Partial	CIVIS Languages	CIVIS IP Inventory
5. EUROPEAN DEGREES									
5.1.	Bachelor's degree	CIVIS Hubs	Faculties / Departments	Min. 180	CIVIS European Diploma + Diploma Supplement	Physical / Blended	Full	CIVIS Languages	CIVIS IP Inventory
5.2.	Master's degree		Min. 60						
5.3.	PhD degree		Doctoral Schools	TBD					