

# Diversifying University Studies: Joint Degrees as a New Model of Academic Mobility

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As one of the first “Joint Bologna Master Programmes” in Europe, the Graz project has been considered a forerunner in the European Higher Education Area. This article discusses its background and development, using its successes and the lessons learned in Graz as an example. Although there is no such thing as a generic recipe for joint degree development, and despite the diversity of the range of joint degrees developed in the project, some of the issues and challenges were recurrent. This article summarises the main problems: terminology, coordination, curriculum design / length of programmes, finding a common language, tuition fees and funding, mobility, and issuing a joint diploma.

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 Research networks, alliances and partnerships

## 1. Introduction<sup>1</sup>

### The Austrian Higher Education Acts

Since the implementation of fundamental university reforms required by the Austrian Higher Education Acts (UOG 1993 and UG 2002), internationalisation has played a central role in the overall strategies of Austrian universities. Based on a clear commitment of the Austrian Government to implement the Bologna Process on a national level, the necessary legal framework was provided by the Acts. This on the one hand forced a rapid implementation of the Bologna Process, sometimes leading to problems and challenges that Austrian universities are still grappling with today. On the other hand, however, the University Act of 2002<sup>2</sup> in particular provided the backdrop for universities to recognise these reforms as opportunities for new internationalisation strategies. Austrian universities gained status as fully autonomous institutions in 2003 and were able thereafter to position themselves internationally through new formats of interuniversity collaboration based on curricula reforms and joint programmes. In the last decade, the development of joint programmes as an integral part of the Bologna Process has received special attention from policy makers. Joint programmes in which bi- or multilateral university consortia confer joint or double degrees to successful graduates are thus currently high on the agenda of European universities.

### Explore new forms of international academic mobility and cooperation

Joint and double degree programmes between two or more universities can be radical endeavours. Their implementation challenges institutional structures and organisational processes. It involves curricular reforms, extensive legal knowledge of local, regional, and global regulations, and strong academic involvement. It thus demands on all levels from the institutions involved flexibility, cross-cultural competence, personal and financial commitment, and a vision of the opportunities such new structures offer to the higher education community

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<sup>1</sup> Similar articles on this topic, although with a different focus and in different contexts, have appeared in various publications on higher education. Cf. Ulla Kribernegg, Roberta Maierhofer. "Transatlantic Relationships in Higher Education: American Studies and the Impact of the Bologna Process". Eds. João Ferreira Duarte, Marta Pacheco Pinto, and Susana Araújo. *Trans/Oceanic, Trans/American, Trans/lation: Issues in International American Studies*. Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009, 51 – 62. Ulla Kribernegg, Roberta Maierhofer. "Joint and Dual Degree Programs: New Ventures in Academic Mobility". Eds. Shepherd Laughlin and Rajika Bhandari. *Global Education Research Report. Report Two: Global Mobility in Higher Education*. NY: Institute of International Education (IIE), 65 – 77. Ulla Kribernegg, Roberta Maierhofer. "Curriculum Design for Joint Master's Programs: Challenges and Opportunities". Eds. Daniel Obst and Matthias Kuder. *Joint and Double Degree Programs – An Emerging Model for Transatlantic Exchange*. NY: Institute of International Education (IIE), 2009, 55 – 59.

<sup>2</sup>[http://www.bmwf.gv.at/wissenschaft/national/gesetze/organisationsrecht/ug\\_2002/](http://www.bmwf.gv.at/wissenschaft/national/gesetze/organisationsrecht/ug_2002/) (accessed January 31, 2010).

as a whole. In 2003, a very ambitious joint degree project was launched at the University of Graz<sup>3</sup> that set out to explore new forms of international academic mobility and cooperation in line with the Bologna Process. Because joint degree programmes call for the harmonising of degree structures and quality assurance standards, they are considered important instruments for implementing the objectives set out in the Bologna Declaration, as the basis for creating a common European Educational Area. Joint quality assurance mechanisms as well as mutual recognition of academic degrees and qualifications contribute to transparency, compatibility, and permeability, promote academic mobility on all levels and increase the international employability of graduates. In addition to strengthening the European dimension, such programmes also increase the attractiveness of studying in Europe. The high quality of joint academic programmes is thus guaranteed, contributing to a broader understanding of the highly diverse structures of European universities. Furthermore, students with international and cross-cultural experience, who in addition to their language skills hold international degrees, have a competitive advantage on the labour market, as a study 2008 by the European University Association (EUA) showed.<sup>4</sup>

## 2. Joint Degrees as a New Venture: the Graz Model

As one of the first “Joint Bologna Master Programmes” in Europe, the Graz project has been considered a forerunner in the European Higher Education Area. This article discusses its background, rationale and development, using its successes and the lessons learned in Graz as an example. Within the project, each university was supposed to take on those tasks for which it was most competent and technologically advanced. Thus, all available resources were used as efficiently as possible. The universities, with whom the Joint Degree programmes were developed, were chosen with great care – often on the basis of long-standing cooperation in different areas.

**A forerunner in the  
European Higher  
Education Area**

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<sup>3</sup> The University of Graz, founded in 1585, is the second largest HE institution in Austria, and a multidisciplinary university defining itself as an institution of research and teaching. It is now structured in six faculties and 74 departments offering approx. 100 curricula to about 26,000 students. Every year approx. 3,500 students enroll at the University of Graz. 2,800 students graduate per year, 200 of these with a doctoral degree. For more information, see <http://www.kfunigraz.ac.at/>

<sup>4</sup> Adina Timofei. “Developing and Implementing Joint Programs in Europe: The Results of an EUA Study”, EUA Bologna Handbook: Making Bologna Work. 9. Eds. Eric Froment et al. Berlin: Raabe, 2009, C 4.5-4, 17.

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When in 2003 – based on the new Austrian University Act (UG 2002) – the legal framework for the establishment of Joint Degrees was provided, the University of Graz defined a new international strategy, the main aim of which was to strengthen the quality of teaching and research through the following internationalisation objectives:

- Enhancement of Mobility
- Strategic Focus on Joint Degrees
- Strategic Focus on South-Eastern Europe
- Implementation of Summer Schools
- Internationalisation of education and research via international cooperation projects

Although Joint Degrees were listed as one aspect within these objectives, the development and implementation of jointly developed degree programmes also enhanced the other objectives listed above. From the perspective of the University of Graz, their specific advantages were seen to operate in synergy with the broader goals of internationalising the university.

**Strategic focus on  
South Eastern Europe**

As the first step in Joint Degree development, study fields were chosen which had an interdisciplinary component in teaching and research, and in which the pooling of resources and sharing of academic focus with other universities were seen as having a special added value (such as Gender Studies, Environmental System Studies, Jewish Studies). Another factor that determined the choice of the Joint Degrees to be developed in this first phase was the strategic focus of the University of Graz on South-Eastern Europe. In 1999, the University of Graz defined this focus as consisting of three components: research and teaching on South-Eastern Europe, collaboration with South-Eastern Europe, and Cooperation for South-Eastern Europe, through staff development and institution-building programmes. Two joint degree projects meeting these criteria were therefore selected: South-Eastern European History as a research and teaching area; and English and American Studies set in the context of the Alps-Adriatic region, where a Central European perspective on the Anglo-American world was seen as a special feature providing an added value to the joint degree programme. On a more general level, the internationalisation of existing course offerings (i.e. visiting professors), increasing the attractiveness not only of the university, but the city of Graz as a university town, and the relevance of the region of Styria as a “pull-factor”, were also factors considered when embarking on the project. As a fringe benefit, the University of Graz also felt that by implementing joint degrees parallel to the implementation of the Bologna Process new expertise and additional knowledge could be gained – not only of the potential, but also of the limitations that the national implementation of the Bologna Process revealed. In this way, in addition

to having established very concrete joint degree programmes, the University of Graz gained knowledge and expertise in the area of joint degree development.

In line with the Bologna principles, the joint master's project was defined as follows:

- The JD programmes are research-based Master's programmes in line with the Bologna qualifications structure (120 ECTS, two years).<sup>5</sup>
- The study programmes, curricula, admission and examination regulations are jointly developed and recognised by all consortium partners, while respecting the conditions of the individual universities.
- Students spend part of their studies, a minimum of 30 ECTS credits (one semester) at a partner institution. All exams completed at a partner institution are fully and automatically recognised at a student's home institution.
- The courses offered build on programmes already existing in the participating universities. No new courses need to be developed. Each university contributes to the programme its own field of expertise.
- Summer Schools serve as "catch-up classes" or bridging courses that count towards the 30 ECTS credit requirement of the mobility phase. In addition, the summer programme offers a platform for joint teaching thus reinforcing quality assurance mechanisms and cohesion.
- Upon successful completion of the study programme, students receive one joint diploma which is issued and recognised by all partner institutions.

#### Handout C 3.1-1 The definition of the joint master's project

By securing financial support from local government, it was possible to offer incentives to the initially somewhat hesitant university community. One of the main tasks was to lobby at all levels of the university, in order to explain the structure and the benefits of such a study programme. A lot of time was spent in meetings, where informational material was distributed and members of the senate and the curricula committees were persuaded of the added value of joint degree pro-

#### Lobbying at all levels of the university

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<sup>5</sup> As in Austria, the law defined a 3+2 structure: all JD programmes were 2-year (120 ECTS) programmes.

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grammes. In a second bid, the project was extended to include further interdisciplinary Master programmes and one doctoral programme. Funding was secured for developing a summer school, providing additional scholarships and making it possible to hire staff for the increased administrative efforts necessary to coordinate more than 20 institutions from Europe, the United States and Asia. Adding new partners and organising activities such as cooperation meetings and workshops, summer schools, and presentation of the project at international conferences required additional commitment from the University of Graz. Today, a project team with experts in the Office for International Relations coordinates the development and implementation of the programmes on the administrative level in cooperation with the Vice Rector for International Relations and Interdisciplinary Cooperation. The academic issues are in the responsibility of professors working in the field of the joint programmes. In order to advance the university's competitive profile, the joint degree project became a strategic focus area with special support from the rectorate.

**Reinforcing the strategic priorities**

In addition, the project also reinforces one of the strategic priorities of the University of Graz. Based on its longstanding collaboration with higher education institutions in South-Eastern Europe, Graz was the first university in the German-speaking countries to establish a focus on cooperation with the region and to make of this a feature defining its profile as a university committed to a development mission. One of the aims of this strategy is the involvement of the countries of South-Eastern Europe in the creation of a common European Higher Education Area. In 2008, the successful bid for a Tempus project, *Example of Excellence of Joint (Degree) Programmes Development in South Eastern Europe* became the basis for further developing joint programmes and degrees. In the framework of the Tempus project, four additional joint (degree) programmes will be developed with universities in the Western Balkan region. In addition, structures will be established to ensure the sustainability and the quality assurance of joint programmes, thus providing models of good practice not only for the partners in South-Eastern Europe but for all the universities involved. Whereas the main objective will be the development and implementation of joint programmes, five task forces will in addition examine the different legal and institutional contexts in terms of existing procedures and structures, and develop a good practice model by publishing concrete guidelines.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> For more information see [www.joinsee.eu](http://www.joinsee.eu).

Name of the degree programme	Consortium members
M.A. in English and American Studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Graz / Austria</li> <li>- Paris 7, Denis Diderot / France</li> <li>- Bamberg / Germany</li> <li>- Pécs / Hungary</li> <li>- Ca'Foscari Venice / Italy</li> <li>- The City College of the City University New York / U.S.A.</li> <li>- Roehampton /United Kingdom</li> </ul>
M.A. in Jewish Studies – History of the Culture of the Jews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Graz / Austria</li> <li>- College for Jewish Studies Heidelberg / Germany</li> </ul>
M.A. in History of South Eastern Europe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Graz / Austria</li> <li>- Cluj / Romania</li> <li>- Ljubljana / Slovenia</li> </ul>
M.Sc. in Sustainable Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Graz / Austria</li> <li>- Leipzig / Germany</li> <li>- Ca'Foscari Venice / Italy</li> <li>- Hiroshima / Japan</li> <li>- Utrecht / The Netherlands</li> <li>- Basel / Switzerland</li> </ul>
M.A. in Gender Studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Graz / Austria</li> <li>- Bochum / Germany</li> </ul>
M.A. in Latin American Studies*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Graz / Austria</li> <li>- Leuven / Belgium</li> <li>- Poitiers / France</li> </ul>
M.Sc.. in Cultural Sociology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Graz /Austria</li> <li>- Zadar / Croatia</li> </ul>
PhD in Diversity Management and Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Graz / Austria</li> <li>- Sofia / Bulgaria</li> <li>- Bologna / Italy</li> <li>- Primorska / Slovenia</li> </ul>
*this degree will be turned into a MA in Interamerican Studies	

**Table C 3.1-1 Joint and double degree programmes coordinated by the University of Graz**

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### 3. Issues in Joint Degree Development

#### **There is no generic recipe**

Although there is no such thing as a generic recipe for joint degree development, and despite the diversity of the range of joint degrees developed, some of the issues and challenges were recurrent. The following paragraphs summarise the main problems: terminology, coordination, curriculum design / length of programmes, finding a common language, tuition fees and funding, mobility, and issuing a joint diploma.

#### **A lack of clear terminology**

##### **Terminology**

One of the first difficulties was the lack of clear terminology. While a “joint programme” can mean anything from a jointly organised lecture series to a double degree programme, the terms “joint and double degree” here refer to programmes that have been jointly developed by two (double) or more universities (joint degree) that, upon completion, grant a double / joint diploma – either a single piece of paper issued by all consortium members, or two separate degrees. Academic degrees are granted within the legal contexts of the institutions involved, thus providing students with a diploma that is automatically accepted in all the countries of the participating universities. When setting out to develop a joint programme, it is therefore essential for the consortium to agree on a definition and to use the terms in the same way. Otherwise a lot of time and energy will be expended in what a colleague has described as “terminology travel”, i.e. repeated visits to partner universities to define the terminology used.

#### **A high level of structural complexity**

##### **Coordination**

As the University of Graz is currently coordinating one large umbrella project with more than 20 partner universities in eight research-based joint degree programmes, the level of structural complexity is quite high. What proved enormously important right from the beginning was the fact that there was already sufficient funding available for the coordination and development phase. Actually, almost half of the project budget went into staff and travel expenses. Only about one quarter was earmarked for student and teacher mobility in the second phase of the project. This way, international consortium meetings could be held without overburdening the partner universities’ budgets – a fact that should not be underestimated. Nevertheless, it was decided to ask the partner universities for at least some financial support, e.g. for sending their delegates to meetings. This proved important, as it ensured that the partner university’s management had been informed about the project and, most importantly, it demonstrated the partner’s commitment. As a first step, a letter of intent was signed, which was the basis of all further steps. Although these letters did not involve legal obligations, they confirmed that the university was

committed to developing such a joint degree, regardless of how the implementation procedures were defined after the completion of the curriculum development.

While the University of Graz provided the administrative support, the partner institutions nominated an academic coordinator who attended the meetings, determined the academic content and kept university management informed about the progress of the project. What proved most important was the flow of communication among all coordinators. With an international consortium, communication is not an easy task because the issues and difficulties increase (ideally in proportion to the added value) with each partner university. It involves detailed knowledge of all partners' structural and academic issues as well as of the highly diverse legal systems that apply. Not all universities are autonomous regarding curriculum development, tuition, and the granting of degrees. Sometimes, regional or national laws need to be considered. Most importantly, however, the flow of information within every single partner university needs to be facilitated in order to avoid unpleasant surprises at later stages of development. Management changes also need to be taken into account: even minor changes in university administration carry risks and require intensified communication efforts – which costs extra time and effort. Therefore, the most important strategy to ensure the sustainability of a project is to involve as many people as possible at an early stage. If the project is linked to only one person, the consortium could risk losing a partner should this person withdraw from the project. In order to guarantee the consistent implementation and the sustainability of the programme, the University of Graz provided service packages, checklists, information material within the frame of a clearly defined project management strategy. (See Annex 1 and 2)

**Involve as many people as possible at an early stage**

### Curriculum Design / Length of Programmes

Whereas the Bologna Process introduced a three-cycle system (bachelor, master, and PhD) in the whole of Europe (and beyond), the length of each individual cycle has been decided within individual national contexts. 3+2 and 4+1 systems (bachelor and master programmes) coexist within the European context, and also, in the case of English universities, a 3+1 system. In one specific degree, Roehampton University in the UK has to introduce the two-year master programme, all their other master degrees being only one-year-programmes. For this reason, Roehampton currently has the status of associated partner, with full member status being achieved when the 2-year master format is internally approved.

**Individual national contexts**

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### Finding a common denominator

It was more difficult to find a common denominator for each consortium at the level of academic content. The “Tuning Project”,<sup>7</sup> an EU-funded project which was started in the year 2000 with aim of harmonising European educational structures with an emphasis on subject areas, that is to say, study content, provided excellent advice regarding the modularisation of curricula. After a first consortium meeting of the programme coordinators for English and American Studies, in which it seemed almost impossible to reconcile six different curricula, a modular structure with a clear emphasis on learning outcomes – rather than on subject content – emerged as the perfect solution to accommodate each partner’s needs.

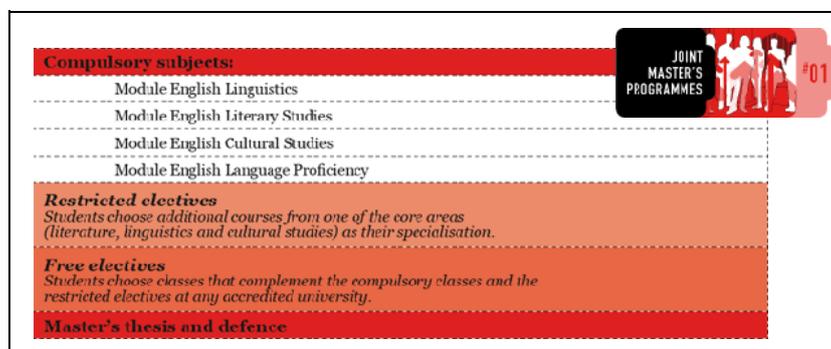


Fig. C 3.1-1 Structure English & American Studies

This example was used as a model for the other programmes e.g. Sustainable Development and History of South Eastern Europe)

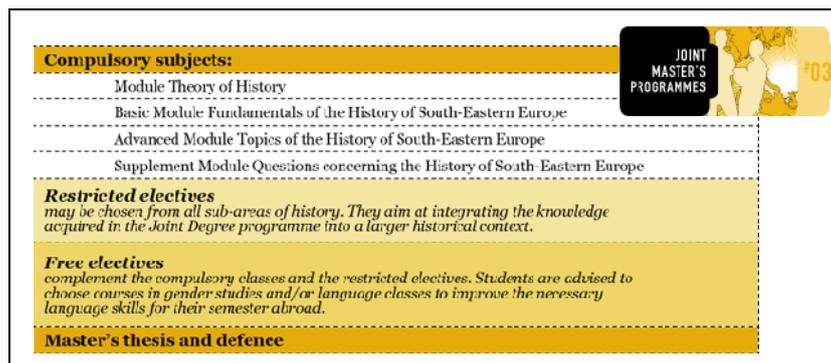


Fig. C 3.1-2 Structure History of South Eastern Europe

<sup>7</sup> European Commission – Education and Training, “Tuning Educational Structures in Europe”, [http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/educ/tuning/tuning\\_en.html](http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/educ/tuning/tuning_en.html) (accessed 23 December 2008).

A good knowledge of legal requirements and structural procedures was necessary in order to reconcile the very different needs of the seven partner institutions. Sometimes, university management had to adapt statutes or by-laws, including passages referring to joint degree programmes. More importantly, however, the consortium members worked on the basic assumption that all universities involved were committed to high standards in teaching and research, had good quality assurance mechanisms in place, and operated on a sophisticated level where regulations and procedures were concerned. Having chosen the partner institutions carefully, negotiations were conducted on the basis of mutual trust, and joint regulations were kept to a minimum. As a rule, the respective regulations of each individual university guaranteed a high standard of teaching and research. In addition, however, the consortium developed joint quality assurance mechanisms, while the accreditation processes required by partner institutions (for example, in the case of German universities, by European agencies such as “Acquin”<sup>8</sup> and “AQAS”<sup>9</sup>) were set up as part of the programme.

### **Reconcile the needs of the partner institutions**

In this project, efforts were made to establish the programme using existing courses. The consortium members decided that the added value would consist in the wider variety of courses, from which students could choose, and a range of dedicated professors with diverse areas of research, who could act as their teachers and advisors.

### **Using existing courses**

#### **Finding a Common Language**

When trying to construct a common curriculum or negotiate a cooperation contract, it is important that everybody involved has a reasonable working knowledge of any common language. This is indispensable if misunderstandings and conflict are to be avoided, especially when negotiating the fine detail. Usually, the working language of an international consortium will be English. Most of the time, this is the only solution when working with international partners who do not share a common official language, even if it is far from perfect. Even if all delegates present at a meeting are able to speak a common language other than English, it cannot be assumed that everybody who will deal with the curriculum and cooperation contract at a later stage will be able to read additional foreign languages. Some universities may require translations of all relevant documents into their official language.

### **The importance of a common language**

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<sup>8</sup> ACQUIN – Accreditation, Certification and Quality Assurance Institute: <http://www.acquin.org/en/index.php>

<sup>9</sup> AQAS – Agentur fuer Qualitaetssicherung durch Akkreditierung von Studiengaengen (Agency for quality assurance through accreditation of degree programs), <http://www.aqas.de> (accessed 31 January 2010).

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**Strict language policies** Language issues can be of great relevance, especially when working with countries with strict language policies such as Slovenia, Belgium or France. In Slovenia, for example, national law requires that courses offered in English must also be offered in Slovene (unless they are language classes). Only up to 10 % of all courses offered at a university can be in a foreign language. This means that students who spend their semester at a Slovene partner university either have to be fluent in Slovene, or, if the university offers courses taught in English, that these courses may have to be taught also in Slovene – with considerable impact on the university budget.

**Using established university networks** The language aspect was given due consideration when the idea to develop joint degrees at Graz University was put into practice. It was for exactly this reason that Graz chose to start with the joint degree in English and American Studies. It could be assumed that academics working in this field had perfect language skills, which already eliminated one of the obstacles, the lack of a common working language. The idea proved successful. The negotiations actually started with a meeting of vice-presidents and professors, who were also scholars of English and American Studies. The original plan was to set up a programme that brought a central European perspective to the academic field of English and American Studies. In recognition of the university network in the context of which the idea had been generated, it was first called “English and American Studies for the Alps Adriatic Region”. Apart from the advantages of developing a degree in the framework of an established university network, a regional focus was considered highly relevant for the development of a regional identity within the context of the European Union.

**Different solutions for different programmes** Different solutions were found for different programmes. The Master’s programme in Sustainable Development, for example, offers its basic module in the first semester in the local language of the respective host university, while the specialisation tracks chosen during the mobility period will be mostly taught in English. The History of South Eastern Europe programme is completely taught in the local languages. Students thus need to prove that they have the requisite knowledge of at least two of the relevant languages.

#### **Tuition Fees and Funding**

**A sensitive issue** One of the most sensitive issues in joint programme development is the question of tuition fees. Most European universities – with the exception of English institutions – charge relatively small fees, due to culturally different approaches to the issue of access to higher education. In the case of the Graz project, it was not possible to determine a standardised fee for all students, due to individual universities’ regulations. As a consequence of this, the tuition fees charged are those of the home university. Students in their mobility phase are regarded as

regular students and are granted normal access to the facilities of the host university. Local fees and health insurance provisions may vary institution by institution.

### **Mobility**

In the Graz project, student and teacher mobility are integral parts of the programmes. It is a requirement of a two-year joint master programme that at least 30 ECTS credits (one semester of course work) have to be acquired at an institution other than the home institution. Ideally, the stay abroad would be in the second or third (out of four) semesters. For administrative reasons, the first semester is spent at the home institution. When applying for admission to the programme, students are asked to indicate their preference concerning the universities for their foreign study placement. If possible, these preferences will be taken into consideration by the coordinators. Some places, however, especially those at U.S. universities, are allocated on a competitive basis, in order to avoid discriminating between different funding systems. This allows for U.S. universities to balance the number of incoming and outgoing students. Within the European context, mobility programmes such as *ERASMUS* cover at least part of the costs. Special scholarships have been established for U.S. students at the University of Graz, in order to offer additional incentives to participate in such a programme.

**Student and teacher mobility integral part of the programmes**

Credit transfer and recognition are also integral parts of a joint degree programme. A detailed learning agreement is negotiated between student and programme coordinator (academic advisor) in order to ensure that the student takes advantage of all available opportunities to the greatest possible extent. If a student is unable to acquire 30 ECTS credits during his or her mobility phase, an additional summer school, "GUSS – Graz University Summer School"<sup>10</sup>, offered in cooperation with the partner institutions, can be used as a catch-up course and counts towards a student's mobility credit requirement. The summer school consists of a balanced mixture of seminars: in the subject areas in the morning, in transferable skills workshops in the afternoon, and with meet-the-professor-sessions in the evening, as well as various cultural events such as excursions. In addition, it facilitates networking for students and teachers, leads to stronger teaching and research collaboration among partner universities, and provides intercultural learning in a more relaxed atmosphere. Additional funding is provided by the University of Graz and by the European Commission to cover the costs of student and faculty mobility.

**Detailed learning agreements**

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<sup>10</sup> University of Graz – Office of International Relations, "GUSS – Graz University Summer School", <http://www.jointdegree.eu/?id=96&lng=1> (accessed 31 January 2010).

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**Joint diplomas instead of double or multiple diplomas**

**Issuing a Joint Diploma**

As a recent report released by IIE – the Institute of International Education and Freie Universität Berlin – shows, most joint programmes are double degree programmes.<sup>11</sup> On completion, a student receives two diplomas, usually issued by the institutions where credits were acquired. These diplomas are recognised officially in the countries where the degree-awarding institutions are located. If a consortium consists of many partners, a multiple degree is also possible. The Graz project consortia decided to issue joint diplomas instead of double or multiple diplomas, providing students with one diploma signed by all consortium members. Needless to say, this arrangement raises many questions – of language policy, data transfer and data protection, document design, safety regulations, and awarding procedures. Moreover, the way in which a diploma is awarded can vary significantly between cultures. To meet the requirements of all universities involved, a diploma design workshop was organised in order to find a common denominator. As a result of these discussions and negotiations, a joint diploma is now issued for the joint degrees mentioned in this article.

**Mutual trust in combination with quality assurance and programme accreditation**

Apart from the question of what information a diploma needs to include, one of the biggest problems with joint degrees is the assumption that a student can obtain a degree only from the university where he or she has spent at least a certain proportion, often more than 50 %, of his or her time. In a consortium with more than two member universities, this regulation can no longer apply. The universities need to agree that having studied a joint curriculum, a student can receive a joint diploma. As with many other aspects of joint programme development, mutual trust in combination with accurate quality assurance and official programme accreditation is a key component of joint degree development.

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<sup>11</sup> IIE – Institute of International Education and Freie Universität Berlin, Joint and Double Degree Programs in the Transatlantic Context. A Survey Report, 5, <http://www.iienetwork.org/?p=TDP> (accessed 31 January 2010).

#### 4. Lessons Learned and We Are Still Learning

Because each joint programme has its own specifics and local contexts, it is very difficult to come up with general guidelines of how to develop joint programmes that would be of help to new consortia. Many of the issues have already been mentioned above. One of the standard guidelines worth mentioning, however, is the European University Association's ten "Golden Rules for New Joint Masters' Programmes"<sup>12</sup> as well as the EMNEN report.<sup>13</sup> These documents and checklists proved extremely helpful in the planning and implementation phase of a joint or double degree programme.

**The EUA's "Ten Golden Rules for New Joint Masters' Programmes"**

In addition, our experience shows that it is absolutely vital for the success of a project that commitment is ensured not only on the academic and administrative levels, but also that university leadership is involved. A project with such a high degree of complexity needs to be organised in both top-down as well as bottom-up manners. If the university management is convinced that a joint degree programme in a certain field is desirable, while the academics in the field do not fully support the idea, the project will probably fail – because success depends to a large extent on personal commitment and networks operating at the academic level. If, on the other hand, academics or administrators support the project, but the university management is not committed on all levels from department heads to deans and the rectorate, the project will fail as well – not least due to a lack of financial support.

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<sup>12</sup> European University Association, Developing Joint Masters' Programmes for Europe. Results of the Joint Masters Project (March 2002 – January 2004), (Brussels: European University Association, 2004) 23 – 24: [www.eua.be/eua/jsp/en/upload/Joint\\_Masters\\_report.1087219975578.pdf](http://www.eua.be/eua/jsp/en/upload/Joint_Masters_report.1087219975578.pdf) (accessed 31 January 2010).

<sup>13</sup> EMNEN Report: Guidelines for Quality Enhancement in European Joint Master Programmes (Brussels: European University Association, 2006).

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## 5. Conclusion

### **New and radical ventures**

Joint degree programmes not only contribute to the transparency and the harmonisation of structures in European and international higher education cooperation, but they also facilitate the mobility of students and faculty. Generations of students remember the difficulty of translating grading schemes, explaining transcripts, and arguing with their advisors back home for their course work to be accepted at their home institutions. They would have wished for the automatic recognition of credits earned during their study abroad period. Joint degree programmes include this feature as a built-in mechanism and can therefore be considered as new and radical ventures in academic mobility.

### **A unique approach**

The Graz joint degree project described in this article is unique in its approach to educational cooperation in joint research-based masters degrees, because only a very few programmes confer joint diplomas at this level. The University of Graz and its partner institutions have set themselves the goal of raising the quality of their academic programmes by contributing to the diversity of courses offered, as well as by giving their joint-degree-holding graduates a competitive edge in the labour market.

### **A worthwhile undertaking**

Coordinating several joint programmes not only contributes to a university's international reputation but also creates a global network of administrators, scholars and students who share common goals. It facilitates international mobility and advances the implementation of the Bologna goals. It increases campus internationalisation and cross-cultural awareness. Despite the challenges such a venture involves, everyone involved in it has consistently considered the joint degree projects described in this article to be worthwhile undertakings. The website of the Graz project can be found at: [www.jointdegree.eu](http://www.jointdegree.eu).

**Biographies:**

**Roberta Maierhofer**, Professor at the Department of American Studies, Academic Director of the Center for the Study of the Americas, and in her third term as Vice Rector for International Relations and Interdisciplinary Cooperation of the University of Graz, has played an instrumental role in the development of the university's international study, joint-study, and exchange programmes as well as its Office for International Relations.

**Ulrike Krawagna**, a graduate from the University of Graz in History and French Studies, has been a staff member of the Office of International Relations at the University of Graz since 2001. In the implementation phase of the Bologna Process, she acted as Bologna Promoter (2003 – 2007). Now she directs the project team implementing joint degrees with a special focus on curriculum development and co-operation contracts.

**Ulla Kriebernegg**, a graduate of the University of Graz, was centrally involved in the joint degree development as an administrator in the Office of International Relations. She now works as an Assistant Professor for the Center of the Study of the Americas at the University of Graz, where she completed a dissertation on the impact of the Bologna reforms on U.S. higher education.

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### APPENDIX: JD Service Package for participating institutions

What legal frameworks are there concerning	
1	the development of a Joint Degree program and the awarding of a joint degree
2	the awarding of an academic degree (title)
2a	What degree will students receive?
2b	Who will award the diploma?
2c	What does the diploma look like?
2d	Who will sign the diplomas?
3	the duration of the program
3a	What is the students' workload and when do they have to complete it?
3b	When can students extend their study program (illness...)?
4	the structuring of the program (number of required subjects, electives and free electives, etc.)
4a	What choices do students have in the framework of the curriculum?
4b	What differences are possible and/or acceptable?
4c	What links are there between the new study program and already existing or other new courses of study?
4d	Are the resources needed to fulfil the profile secured?
5	the use of ECTS
6	the recognition of a program which has been partly completed abroad
7	the development of a study program (autonomously at the university, through the ministry, etc.) – description of the procedure
7a	What decisions are made by whom and when?
7b	What links are there between the new study program and already existing or other new courses of study?
7c	Has the new program been adapted to the general university strategy?

8	tuition fees
8a	What do they include?
8b	Where are the fees charged?
8c	Can the partner universities mutually waive the tuition fees?
8d	Do students have to pay fees for all the semesters at their home university or just for those in which they actually study at this university?
8e	What effect does a potential necessary prolongation of studies (e.g. due to illness) have on the tuition fees?
8f	Is there a joint fund?
9	the language of instruction
9a	What is the language of instruction of the program?
9b	What level of language proficiency is required for admission to the program?
9c	Can a sufficient number of places be guaranteed in the language courses offered by the universities?
<b>Curriculum/Joint Degree</b>	
10	Who is the target audience?
10a	Are the limits for the maximum and minimum number of participants realistic?
10b	How many students from participating and foreign universities are there going to be?
10c	Should there be an aptitude test for the candidates' self-assessment?
10d	What does the qualification profile for people interested in the program look like?
11	Which qualification profile? (educational goal, learning outcomes, fields of activity)
11a	What are the results of a demand analysis on interest in the program and the job market?
11b	Is the definition of the possible fields of activity sufficient?
12	Which of the partner institutions' existing curricula can be integrated?
13	Which modules and courses can be integrated?
14	Which workload has to be produced at which partner institution?
15	Which types of courses are offered?
16	Compare the examination regulations (types and numbers of examinations, academic theses, etc.)

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<b>Organization</b>	
17	Is the Joint Degree securely anchored within the institutional structure of the partner university?
17a	Do measures and offers exist in the subject area to promote a corporate identity with the institution?
17b	Who are the contact persons for the individual institutions and authorities?
17c	Where are the institutions and authorities located and how are they involved?
18	What regulations are there concerning the financing of study programs?
18a	Is financing of the program secured to such an extent that the costs for its implementation are justified?
19	What regulations are there concerning quality assurance (accreditation, ex ante evaluation, evaluations, etc.)?
20	How can the mobility of teaching staff and students be organized?
20a	What funding opportunities in terms of mobility are there for non-third-country grantees?
21	What roles do the individual partner institutions play?
21a	Academic calendar
21b	Application deadline
21c	Admission
21d	Mentoring of students
21e	Are there joint guidelines and a joint committee of the participating universities for the selection procedure?
<b>Co-operation contract – what regulations are there concerning</b>	
22	admission?
22a	Which university will assume responsibility for the application and admission procedures?
22b	Does a model for online applications at one of the partner universities already exist?
22c	What do the forms look like?
22d	What are the application deadlines? Consider the length of time foreign students need for their visa applications!
22e	Will students be enrolled at all participating institutions, only at the one they are studying at the moment, or at those they will attend as part of their master's program?

22f	Is it necessary / desirable to gather all the candidates in a joint database?
22g	Who should / can have access to a potential joint database?
22h	Will a joint selection committee be formed for the selection of candidates?
22i	How often will it meet?
22j	Have the selection criteria for students been set up jointly?
22k	In which language does the application have to be submitted?
22l	Do the selection criteria meet the regulations of all the partner universities?
23	tuition fees?
23a	see point 8
24	the grading system?
25	examination regulations?
25a	How is the examination committee put together?
25b	How often will the examination committee meet?
25c	How is the examination administration / examination implementation organized?
25d	What workload does a student have to complete in order to be awarded which degree?

**Table C 3.1-2 Checklist for co-operation meetings**

1	In which subject area(s) will the Joint Degree Program be implemented? Name of the Joint Degree Program.
2	Which academic degree will be awarded? Describe the institution that will award the certificate/diploma (together, separate?).
3	Which qualification profile should be included in the Joint Degree Program? What kind of added value does the completion of the program have for graduates?
4	Which fields of activity result from completing the Joint Degree Program?
5	List the possibilities to continuing studies that the Joint Degree Program offers at the respective partner institutions (in the respective states/countries).
6	What are the admission criteria?
7	What are the examination regulations?

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8	What roles do the individual partner institutions play in the implementation of the program?
9	Describe the structure of the program and state which parts must or can be completed at which universities.
10	Give a description of the quality assurance measures (internal quality assurance methods at the respective partner institutions, evaluations, accreditation, etc.).
11	Give a description of to what extent the recognition of the program by the responsible national authorities and professional associations is secured.
12	Give a description of to what extent the financing of the program is secured.

**Table C 3.1-3 Project plan for the curriculum (Joint Degree Master's Program)**

1	Description of the participating institutions + distribution of roles.
1a	What is the status quo at the individual universities / higher education institutions?
2	Description and kind of program and academic degree.
3	Short summary: Qualification profile (see Curriculum).
4	Information on the administration of the study program (administrative headquarters): administration of dossiers and career records, awarding of diploma, admission procedure, organization of mobility.
5	Organization of the study program: duration of academic year, division into semesters, duration of stay abroad.
5a	Should there be a preparation course?
5b	Would a preparation course count towards the workload?
5c	How would a preparation course be financed?
5d	Are summer schools planned? Who is entitled to take part in summer schools? Who organizes the summer courses?
5e	In which cases is a leave of absence possible? Who decides on this?
6	ECTS regulations
7	What are the examination regulations? Regulations on the master's thesis and final examinations.
8	Structure of study program, sharing out of modules among partner institutions.

9	Form of teaching (types of courses, contact teaching, new forms of teaching (E-learning)).
10	Language policy
10a	Should participating students attend a language course in the target language in preparation for the program?
10b	Are there enough language courses (at least 2 EU languages, not necessarily in teaching) for third-country grantees via Erasmus Mundus?
10c	Should international participants in the program be offered a basic course in German during their stay at the respective university? Who will pay for the language courses?
11	Admission regulations and selection procedures
12	Tuition fees, insurances, other fees
13	Financial plan
14	Quality assurance measures
15	Model of the diploma
16	Guidelines for students:
16a	Information on the program (aim, duration, structure)
16b	Admission requirements
16c	Admission provisions
16d	Documents
16e	Information on the organization of mobility (and grants)
16f	Useful addresses and contact persons

**Table C 3.1-4**                      **Project Plan for the co-operation contract  
(divided into possible headings)**

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25.01.2013

Joint Degrees

AP	Wiss	Ver	Inc	Ucr	Inc	Ucr	Inc	Ucr	Inc	Ucr	Inc	Ucr	Inc	Ucr	Inc	Ucr	Inc
1	Project Management	UcrT		UcrT		UcrT		UcrT		UcrT		UcrT		UcrT		UcrT	
1.1	Organisational Structure	UcrT		UcrT		UcrT		UcrT		UcrT		UcrT		UcrT		UcrT	
1.1.1	Institutionalisation																
1.1.2	Appointment of coordinators	Ua															
1.1.3	Organisational structure Graz																
1.2	Communication donor	Ua															
1.2.1	Interim report	Ua / G															
1.3	Finances	Ua															
1.3.1	Project implementation: staff	Ucr															
1.3.2	Financing of further activities	Ua															
1.3.3	Eurojects	Ucr															
1.3.4	Application future fund	Ua	30.9.														
1.4	PM/JD																
1.5	Project Close Down Event																
2	Curriculum/ Contract	UcrT		UcrT		UcrT		UcrT		UcrT		UcrT		UcrT		UcrT	
2.1	Accreditation	D															
2.1.1	Evaluation:	DUi															
2.1.2	Check	DUi															
2.1.2.1	Approval procedure	DUi															
2.2	Peer-Review																
2.2.1	Ex-ante Evaluation																
2.2.2	Peer Review																
2.2.3	Curriculum																
2.2.4	Minutes																
2.2.5	Planning: Finance/Staff																
2.2.6	Senate																
2.2.7	Approval of Senate																
2.2.8	Signature Cooperation contract																
3	Administration/ Organisation	UcrT		UcrT		UcrT		UcrT		UcrT		UcrT		UcrT		UcrT	
3.1	Data	D															
3.1.1	content																
3.1.2	BIB Intern																
3.1.3	course guide																
3.2	Staff/Organisation in Planning	T															
3.3	Selection and Admission	T															
3.3.1	Forms																
3.3.2	Courses																
3.3.3	Selection																
4	PR/Info	UcrT		UcrT		UcrT		UcrT		UcrT		UcrT		UcrT		UcrT	
4.1	PR	D / M															
4.2	PR corporate design	D / M															
4.2.1	Press/Marketing	D	28.2.														
4.2.2	Info for students	D	28.2.														
4.3	WWW	D / M															
4.3.1	www for current outgoing																
4.3.1.1	Welcome Guide for incoming																
4.4	Coordination PR	G															
5	Mobility	T															
5.1	Students	T															
5.1.1	Scholarships																
5.1.2	Erasmus																
5.1.3	Organization: housing etc.																
6	Phase II	T															
6.1	Summer School																
6.2	Internationaliser JD Master South-Eastern European																
6.3	JD PRID																

Büro für Internationale Beziehungen

Fig. C 3.1-3 Work Breakdown Structure