EQUAMBI E+ PROJECT
BILATERAL MEETING

UNIVERSITAT DE BARCELONA

EQUAMBI
Enhancing Quality Assurance Management and
Benchmarking Strategies in Indian Universities

BILATERAL MEETING UB-JADAVPUR

Online Conference through Google Meet ([Link to the Meeting](#))
Friday 26th February
12:00-13:30 CET / 16:30-18:00 IST

AGENDA:

1. **Welcome & Mutual Update**
2. **Update on work done by Jadavpur since March 2020**
   o **Status of coaching** carried out between April and December 2020
   o **Report on the refinement of the implementation plans** from the coaching received
   o **Implementation plan to be launched in January-February 2021**. The **related planned outcome report**, that is expected at the end of June 2021 (an extensive report on how EQUAMBI modified the benchmarking strategies of the partner institution)
3. **Information on pending transfers of funds and proposal for individual monitoring** of administrative justification of project expenditure.
4. **Next steps and other issues**
5. **End of meeting**

ATTENDANCE LIST:

UB – Agustina Calabrese	JADAVPUR – Ajay Kumar Ghosh
UB – Jaume Fortuny	JADAVPUR – Officer
JADAVPUR – Amitava Datta	JADAVPUR – Assistant 1
JADAVPUR – Sudipta De	JADAVPUR – Assistant 2

1. WELCOME & MUTUAL UPDATE

The situation in Kolkata and in the whole state of West Bengal remains bad due to the COVID pandemic. The lockout is still active in the public sector, affecting Jadavpur University as a state-run public university.

There have been no meetings in the university, only for emergency matters. Some professors of this university died due to COVID. Now there have been outbreaks of the new variants of the coronavirus, which have led to major restrictions on mobility in the region.

This situation has led to the development of new protocols and online teaching systems. These protocols are useful in humanities education and in all kinds of theoretical lectures. But they are difficult to apply in technologies and engineering, especially in technical laboratories and technological practices. This issue has been cleverly addressed with video lectures of experiments, but it is still not enough as students are missing the opportunity to work with technological machines and to gain hands-on experience.

The University is still closed to face-to-face teaching and normal activities. This situation cannot be reversed until a directive from the state government allows the university to reopen. This is unlikely to happen in 2-3 months due to the state elections scheduled to take place in a month's time.

The University of Barcelona reports that staff continue to work from home. And that they only physically come to the University's facilities for very specific matters on specific days.

This coming semester, if the slight improvement in COVID infections and hospital capacity is maintained, first-year students will return to face-to-face classes every 15 days (classes will be divided into 2 groups, to avoid overcrowding in the classroom and the maintenance of sanitary distances), following the classes at home or in the classroom every week alternately.

However, this situation could be reversed, as the new, more contagious variants are spreading fast in the region. We can hardly have a situation of some normality until the end of 2021, by which time a significant part of the population will have received the vaccine.

Even so, the University of Barcelona is coordinating the activities of the EQUAMBI project with the European and Indian partners and is offering all its support to Jadavpur to enable the development of the project's pending activities.

2. **UPDATE ON THE WORK DONE BY JADAVPUR UNIVERSITY SINCE MARCH 2020**

Jadavpur is asked to state where they are in the development of Work Package 5, to detail:
- The status of the coaching undertaken between April and December 2020.
- To report on the refinement of implementation plans based on the coaching received
- To report on the timing and scope of the Implementation Plan.

It is recalled that a comprehensive report on how EQUAMBI modified the benchmarking strategies of Jadavpur is expected from each of them by the end of June 2021. And a summary of this report shall be presented to the final conference, to be led by NAAC (organised online) at the beginning of July 2021.

Jadavpur is informed that the extension of the project was approved, and that the eligibility period will end on 14 July 2021

Jadavpur University reports the following:

Despite the current situation at the University, during 2020 some of the previous works related to the implementation of future QA strategies have started to be implemented. Namely:
- Redesign of the website, to make it more accessible
- Improvement of the online system for assessments and marks
- Don't have LMS yet, but replaced for the moment by Google Meet and Google Classroom
- Starting the proposition to NAAC accreditation and benchmarking (despite facing difficulties because non-technological studies -humanities- and local languages used at the university are highly challenging)

However, Jadavpur reports that he has been able to partially implement the toolkit.

The University of Barcelona, indicates to Jadavpur the need for a report on the challenges and opportunities that the pandemic has brought to the implementation of the QA strategy, reporting on what has happened so far.

Sudipta De reports on activities carried out that have an impact on Quality Assurance at Jadavpur University, such as:
- the work done with the World Bank to improve the Quality of technical university education, where Jadavpur has led a project where it has also mentored other Indian institutions.
- the work carried out with the Chamber of Industry also in relation to the Quality Management and Quality Assurance system

From the above, it appears that these interventions represent the realisation of some of the milestones of the implementation plan. The University of Barcelona proposes that the University of Rome, which does the coaching with Jadavpur, evaluates it and, if feasible, it is incorporated in the refinement of the implementation plan.

In this sense, this ongoing or completed work could be detailed in the individual comprehensive report in June and a summary presented at the July event.

3. **INFORMATION ON PENDING TRANSFERS OF FUNDS AND PROPOSAL FOR INDIVIDUAL MONITORING**

The UB explains would be possible to transfer the second instalment of funds as soon as can have the evidences of the work already done by Jadavpur in the project. Despite it's known

the work done, for the Vice-Rector to authorize the payment, the coordination team of the project must present the request for the transfer together with the evidences on Staff Costs, Travel Costs, Costs of Stay and Equipment Costs incurred. Thus, the UB will send a concrete list so that Jadavpur can provide the missing administrative documents and proceed with the authorisation of the transfer of funds.

The coordinator informs that will not transfer neither travel costs nor costs of stay, as they won't be use. Only staff costs will be transferred to partners, depending on the status of the justification of expenses for each partner.

It is stated that, if any partner has more staff costs and (due to the pandemic) we cannot spend on travel and stay costs, the coordinator would like to be able to give a little more funding to cover the additional staff costs that some participating institutions may have had. This depends on what evidence can be presented to the European Commission and whether they can give us their approval. But if the conditions are met, the coordinator will be happy to make the request to the Project Officer of the European Commission.

4. **NEXT STEPS & OTHER ISSUES**

   a) On the outstanding work

   In order to submit the documents for the grant and to demonstrate the amount of work done by the partners, UB wants to justify this project as it was, reflecting the high involvement of all partners.

   - Therefore, Jadavpur will report on the work done from March 2020 to date in relation to the project and its activities. This exercise will help Jadavpur to capture all the work done during the last months.
   - Jadavpur will also send a report indicating how the equipment acquired with the project funds has been used to date in the development of the project work. The idea is to demonstrate that without the acquisition of this equipment it would have been impossible to carry out the project activities.
   - In addition, each Indian partner should write a comprehensive final report on how EQUAMBI modified the benchmarking strategies in each of the Indian partner institutions. This should be an extensive report to be submitted to the coordination by the end of June 2021. All partners have a lot of information to share in this report, so the coordinator would like to remind that this is very important also to demonstrate the work that each partner has done in the last three years. It would be great to close this project with a lot of information to build on the work we have all performed.

   b) On the financial aspect of the project

   - The UB will not transfer any more funds for travel and stay costs. But if the partners have spent more on staff and there are enough evidences, the coordinator will submit

a proposal to the European Commission to allocate more funds for staff costs and ask for their approval.

c) On administrative issues

- Everything concerning documentation and justification must be gathered before March 15th to be able to prepare the second transfer of staff funds by the end of March. To help on that issue, the UB will send a detailed list of needed docs and evidences.
- For the final administrative justification, we will have the months of July and August 2021 to submit the outstanding documents before the coordinator undergoes an internal audit of the project.

d) On pending activities

- The UB will contact the University of Roma to request the re-starting of the coaching sessions with Jadavpur and to review the uptake of the activities carried out on quality improvement by Jadavpur in the implementation plans.
- The UB and Jadavpur will evaluate further on the possibility of doing the pending multiplier event depending on the evolution of the pandemic (even if it must be in online format).
- The UB will coordinate with NAAC for the Final Conference to be held in early July, where each Indian partner is expected to present a summary of the extensive report, among other dissemination activities of the event.

e) On the end of eligibility
End of project: **14th July**