

# EQUAMBI

## QUALITY PLAN

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### Project Objectives

The Indian HE system recognises the essential need to align its national and institutional QA systems with latest international expectations, focussing on ‘outcomes’ and ‘enhancement’ (of achievements, experiences and the processes to them). It has identified that an efficient and effective means of meeting this aim of improving the quality of HE, and in particular in the governance and management of that quality, would be through peer learning focussed on the benchmarking of processes and international good practice.

The Project seeks to provide this and, as a concrete outcome, a new (practical and sustainable) approach to benchmarking that can support India’s HE aspirations through the development of a context-specific ‘benchmarking toolkit’.

Creating benchmarks through comparison and identification of good practice is not a new notion in higher education and the Indian partners recognise the experience and expertise that



the European partners can bring to their assistance through this Project. In particular the Indian partners seek to:

- O1 develop an understanding of the concepts and practices of benchmarking in order to accelerate quality improvement and its management in HE in India,
- O2 improve the capacities of Indian universities to use and develop different tools that will allow them to benchmark and focus their quality management against relevant national and international expectations,
- O3 improve the capacities of Indian university and their partners, including improving/enhancing internal QA mechanisms, supported by clear (new) guidelines and standards,
- O4 improve the capacities of Indian universities to collect, process and analyse data,
- O5 establish network(s) of academic leaders, informed by international expectations of HE, as a unique decision-makers' forum to promote the modernisation of HE management. Such a body would support future leaders and encourage the professionalization of HE management at all levels.
- O6 the creation of new frameworks for ensuring successful and sustainable partnerships between Indian and European HEIs and organisations, to enhance quality and promote the application of internationally recognised good practice.

The Project does not aim at a 'one-off' ranking exercise through comparison of data sets between Indian and European HEIs but will explore in depth the importance of (differing) 'contexts' relevant to Indian HE and develop a 'benchmarking toolkit' (including parameters, procedures and supporting guidelines) to provide better support for consistent, evidence-based decision making in the governance and management of its quality.

In addition, the last specific objective is designed to ensure that the project's impact extends beyond both the life-cycle of the project and the project partnership. EQUAMBI shall operate as a bridge between India and Europe and, most importantly, allow all Indian HEI to participate and enrich their experience of cooperation through the project activities. .

### Impact indicators

How do we know process is being made? How can we know if an initiative is making an impact on universities? How do we know whether our model is sustainable? These are very important questions regarding the project, therefore a suitable method is needed to make the development visible and measure the progress. Indicators provide an effective tool to measure progress and performance.

An indicator is the representation of a trend tracking the measurable change in a system over time. Generally an indicator focuses on a small, manageable set of information that gives a sense of the bigger picture. Therefore it can be seen that there is no need to measure everything. On the other hand, well selected indicators can assist the process to maintain a



focus on the important work areas and take strategic decisions to address problem areas. That helps to make a project sustainable and allows responsible persons and relevant stakeholders to act.

Use of Indicators:

- Measure progress over time against objectives providing information relevant to policy;
- Measure performance against a target to evaluate the effect of actions and plans;
- Present information to the public or stakeholders in a simplified way;
- Identify areas for increased attention by organisations/actors carrying out a project or initiative.

Indicators have two core functions: 1) To provide information to inform the project team, the public and policy makers; 2) To translate data into relevant information. That is, they describe, show trends and communicate the results of implementing objectives.

In order to monitor whether the project is producing the expected impact, a set of short and long term qualitative and quantitative indicators are presented below. Means to measure the indicator are also included.

### *Short and long term impact indicators*

<b>Short Term Impact</b>	<b>Target groups/potential beneficiaries</b>	<b>Quantitative indicators</b>	<b>Qualitative indicators</b>
<b>Better understanding on benchmarking trends in Europe and India</b>	Indian HEIs, EU HEIs, government, NGOS.	Number of meetings, seminars and workshops with internal groups on the use of benchmarking tools	Strategy/mechanisms developed by the HEI to implement future uses of benchmarking in internal and external management List of European good practices to be analysed within the Indian context
<b>Enhancement of HEI's QA mechanisms and data management mechanisms</b>	Indian partners	Number of meetings and working groups to train HEIs staff in the QA Management of T&L/R&I/Internationalisation	Documents defining the approval and implementation of actions related to QA Management of T&L/R&I/Internationalisation within the HEIs



<b>Comparison of structures and procedures of QA Management system in Teaching and Learning/ Research and Innovation/ Internationalisation</b>	Indian QA/Accreditation bodies + Indian HEIs	Number of meetings and working groups to train HEIs staff in the QA Management of T&L/R&I/Internationalisation	Documents defining the approval and implementation of actions related to QA Management of T&L/R&I/Internationalisation within the HEIs
<b>Development of a benchmarking toolkit to support QA management</b>	Indian HEIs + Indian QA/Accreditation bodies + and governmental/regional HE managers	Number of HEIs engaged in the generation of the benchmarking toolkit support QA management	List of actions taken to implement the benchmarking toolkit to support QA management by Indian HEIs
<b>Long Term Impact</b>	<b>Target groups/potential beneficiaries</b>	<b>Quantitative indicators</b>	<b>Qualitative indicators</b>
<b>Enhancement of the QA systems of Indian Universities.</b>	Indian QA/Accreditation bodies + Indian HEIs and governmental/regional HE managers	Number of meetings/workshops to prepare the White Paper and to disseminate the outcomes	List of actions taken to implement the outcomes of the White Paper among Indian HEIs

## Monitoring and evaluation

Planning M&E activities, sources, timing and reporting is an essential aspect of the process and allows the EQUAMBI project partners to conduct the two activities of:

- **Monitoring:** the collection and analysis of information about a project or programme, undertaken while the project/programme is ongoing.
- **Evaluation:** the periodic, retrospective assessment of an organisation, project or activity that might be conducted internally or by external independent evaluators.

To monitor means to observe, and to check progress against plans. Monitoring of activities and outputs means to observe whether intended activities are performed, products are delivered



and whether implementation is on track. It is the systematic and recurring collection of information, and analysis of data from the project implementation, with a view to identifying any need for corrective actions. It allows results, processes and activities to be documented and used as a basis for decision-making and adjustments to ensure the project execution towards attaining its objectives.

Monitoring reports on the operational progress of the project will enable the consortium to:

- assess whether the project is proceeding according to the agreed work schedules, so that the necessary actions may be taken;
- assess the project against agreed indicators
- propose and participate in any necessary reviews of the project as a result of these assessments;
- report to the funding body on the situation and completion prospects for the project.

On the other hand, to evaluate means assessing as systematically and objectively as possible, an ongoing or completed project (the 'how to' of monitoring). Evaluations appraise data and information that inform strategic decisions, thus helping to improve the project or programme in the future. Evaluations should help to draw conclusions about five main aspects of the intervention: relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, sustainability. Monitoring is integrated into the evaluation process. During an evaluation, information from previous monitoring processes will be used to understand the ways in which the project developed and stimulated the foreseen effects. Information gathered in relation to these aspects during the monitoring and evaluation process will provide the basis for the evaluative analysis.

In the case of the M&E of the EQUAM-BI project, the approach is to stress the interrelation between monitoring, assessment and project implementation. The evaluative analysis is not separate from, or added to, a project, but rather is part of it from the beginning. Planning, evaluation and implementation are all parts of a whole, and they work best when they work together and transversally across the project.

Information on whether goals are being met and on how different aspects of the project are working is essential to a continuous improvement process. In addition, and equally important, the process of evaluation will provide new insights or new information that were not anticipated. What are frequently called unanticipated consequences of a project are among the most useful outcomes of the evaluation.

It is useful to develop some guiding principles to ensure that the M&E process is relevant, useful, timely, and credible. Therefore, the M&E and/or the information one collects must be:



- focused and feasible in relation to your available resources (i.e. make sure you focus information collection on what you ‘need to know’, not on what would be ‘nice to know’);
- useful and timely to improve learning, decision making, and project design;
- useable by, and/or comparable to, data collected by other stakeholders (such as the external evaluator) so it contributes to the wider project evaluation;
- credible, valid and reliable to the extent possible within your available resources;

## Internal Quality Monitoring

### Evaluation instruments

As one of the evaluation instruments, a partnership questionnaire will be conducted internally. It will be evaluated whether the management is effective and the partners are satisfied with communication and the distribution of tasks. In addition, it will be investigated whether partners are well aware of their role and responsibilities, the workload attributed to each organisation, and how they assess the implementation of each work package. The **online questionnaire** will be done two times (mid-term and end) in the course of the project and provide qualitative results that will inform the project management.

The online questionnaire consists of a number of questions grouped into thematic modules that the respondent has to answer in a set format. A distinction is made between closed-ended and open-ended questions. The response options for a closed-ended question are exhaustive and mutually exclusive. The types of response for closed-ended questions are rate scale responses presented with a continuous scale on 5 levels: “strongly agree”; “agree”; “neither agree nor disagree”; “disagree”; “strongly disagree”. Instead, an open-ended question asks the respondent to formulate personal opinions.

Partners will fill in the questionnaire through an online tool. The questions for the questionnaire is reported in Annex 1.

The MT and QC will assess the questionnaires and develop a short report that will be presented to and debated by the MT. Concrete follow-up measures will be agreed and communicated to all partners via email and in the context of meetings where all partners are scheduled to attend.



## External evaluation

An external evaluation is an integral part of the Quality Plan. This will allow to consortium to receive a non-biased external perspective on the project management and the project impact. It can also provide valuable recommendations for improvement and to enhance impact. More specifically, the evaluation should:

- a. make an overall independent assessment about the performance of the project, paying particular attention to the impact of the project activities at the level of the partner universities but also more broadly in India
- b. provide recommendations for the enhancement of the project management, and also for the final actions of the project and its closing in 2020, also with regards to sustainability
- c. identify key lessons and propose suggestions for possible follow-up actions – to the entire consortium, its individual members or groups of them

The evaluator/evaluation team – using his/her/their professional judgement and experience to provide an independent and unbiased opinion - shall verify, analyse and assess in detail the issues outlined in the project proposal and workplans, which will be provided to him/her/them in the initial Desk Phase/Inception Phase. The list of issues is not intended to be exhaustive:

- Dynamic of the partnership: Quality and efficiency of the partnership structure and communication channels with relation to achieving project objects, prospects for continued cooperation of partner beyond project time-line, capacity development of partners
- Policy Outcomes: Quality and relevance of conclusions, recommendations and final products produced/under production; in particular, the further implementation of the EQUAMBI “TOOL KIT” and its potential national impact in India.
- Processes and methods used to reach outcomes and their relevance/inclusiveness (project activities utilised to achieve results, such as workshops, focus groups, management meetings, research, etc.)
- Visibility of outcomes and the commitment of partners to articulate and promote them towards stakeholders and policy makers.
- Actual and potential impact of the project, with regards to
  - national associations and their members
  - within the academic community of the university partners
  - beyond the university partnership – reaching other universities in the region
  - possibilities to enhance EU-India higher education collaboration
  - benefits for students and the quality of their higher education
  - the general contribution of the project to the higher education and development priorities in the country



- Contribution of European expertise and experience to the project and added value for European partner participation
- Follow-up and sustainability plans

The evaluation will consist of:

- A Desk Phase, which includes a review of project documentation (project proposal, including logframe, reports, websites, event documentation such as programmes and presentations, etc.)
- A Field Phase: Observation of three project meetings and interviews with relevant partners and participants. The external evaluator will draft interview templates for project visits and conduct interviews with consortium partners and event participants in order to analyse and assess the integration and impact of the project results that have been achieved so far.
- A Synthesis Phase: The results will be summarised in a final report that will be presented to the Management Team (MT) of the project. The MT will disseminate this to all partners and to the European Commission/EACEA.

The methodology will be further described in **Terms of Reference**.

The following profile has been agreed for the evaluator/evaluation team:

- a solid and diversified experience in the specific field of expertise needed, namely teaching and learning reform, development of learning outcomes and qualifications frameworks
- experience in the region (Asia)
- experience with EU funded projects
- full working knowledge of English and excellent report writing
- fully conversant with the principles and working methods of project cycle management



## Annex 1: Project Partnership Questionnaire

### Project Partnership Questionnaire

We kindly ask you to consider this evaluation as a chance to discuss with your colleagues the key aspects of the project implementation (Management, Project progress, Workload and Resources, Partnership and Collaboration) and answer the questions representing the position of your Institution.

#### **A) Management / coordination**

1) Please express your opinion on the general management of the project and the support you have received from University of Barcelona, the Project Coordinator.

*Scale: Strongly agree | Agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree | Strongly disagree/NA*

The guidance I got from the Coordinator was sufficient  
I had a clear view about how to situate my participation in the collaborative work  
Communication with the Coordinator was regular and the Coordinator is approachable  
Communication with the Coordinator was of good quality  
The Coordinator keeps an efficient running of the project  
The Coordinator is flexible and seeks solutions when needed  
Additional suggestions for the improvement of project coordination (open ended)

2) Please express your opinion on the general management of the project and the support you have received from NAAC, the indian CO-coordinator.

*Scale: Strongly agree | Agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree | Strongly disagree/NA*

The guidance I got from NAAC was sufficient  
Communication with NAAC was regular  
Communication with the NAAC was of good quality  
NAAC responds swiftly to my/our queries  
NAAC keeps an efficient running of the project  
NAAC is flexible and seeks solutions when needed  
It is clear to me regarding when I should contact NAAC and for which tasks they are responsible  
Additional suggestions for the improvement of project coordination (open ended)



3) Please express your opinion on the general management of the project and the support you have received from the Management Team (MT) and your national representative in this team:

*Scale: Strongly agree / Agree / Neither agree nor disagree / Disagree / Strongly disagree/NA*

Communication with the MT representative was regular

Communication with the MT was of good quality

I understand the added value of the MT

The MT is important to the impact of the project in my country

Additional suggestions for the improvement of project coordination (open ended)

### **B) Overall impression of the project ongoing progress, workload and resources**

Please express your overall impression of the project ongoing progress, workload and resources

*Scale: Strongly agree / Agree / Neither agree nor disagree / Disagree / Strongly disagree/NA*

During the project, it was easy to respect the work plan schedule

In respect to the work to be done, human resources were: Not sufficient / Sufficient

How do you evaluate the satisfaction with working on the project tasks? Unsatisfied / Partly satisfied / Satisfied / Fully satisfied

The workload is well-balanced between partner institutions

I understand what I have to do in the project

I have enough time for my tasks

My institution is capable to fulfil its tasks

The financial contribution to staff costs is sufficient

My institution is able to co-finance staff costs that the project grant doesn't cover

My institution is able to co-finance travel costs that the project grant doesn't cover

### **C-Partnership and collaboration**

Please express your opinion on the involvement and co-operation of partners within the project and the methods of communication

*Scale: Strongly agree / Agree / Neither agree nor disagree / Disagree / Strongly disagree/NA*

Please rate the effectiveness of internal communications: Effective / Good / Neither good nor poor / Poor / Not used

Partners have interesting and complementary backgrounds

The European partner expertise is fully exploited



Partners' complementary competencies have been used in an efficient way  
The multicultural aspects of the partnership have been taken into account  
I have made new contacts and started new cooperation with other partners as result of the project  
Good practices/examples in Partners' cooperation (open ended)  
What could Partners do to improve collaboration? (open ended)  
Which are in your opinion promising opportunities for the project? (open ended)

#### **D) Dissemination and impact**

Please express your overall impression of the dissemination of project results and impact  
*Scale: Strongly agree | Agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree | Strongly disagree/ NA*

I have read the project dissemination plan and find it very useful  
The project website is well designed and frequently updated  
The project has been actively promoted in my institution/organization  
EQUAMBI is known in my institution  
EQUAMBI is known in my country in the higher education community