



# **Qualifications Awarded by Two or More Degree-Awarding Bodies Characteristics**

**Draft for consultation**

**December 2014**

**UK Quality Code for Higher Education,  
Part A: Setting and Maintaining Academic Standards**

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## About this document

This draft document has been developed in order to provide information and guidance about qualifications awarded by more than one degree-awarding body. The primary purpose of this statement is to protect the interests of students studying for qualifications that are awarded by more than one degree-awarding body, and prospective students who are thinking about undertaking such qualifications. Specifically, it aims to:

- provide information about qualifications awarded by more than one degree-awarding body
- to establish a common understanding of such qualifications through the development of a shared vocabulary
- to provide practical help to UK degree-awarding bodies in the design and delivery of programmes delivered with other degree-awarding bodies.

The statement is concerned with the role of UK degree-awarding bodies in these arrangements, and provides assurance to students, prospective students, employers and the wider public about the security and good standing of UK higher education qualifications.

Qualifications awarded by more than one degree-awarding body are distinctive because they involve a UK degree-awarding body working with another degree-awarding body to **award one or more qualifications** where **both (or all)** organisations exercise their degree awarding powers in conjunction with each other.

In this statement four terms for this kind of qualification are identified, namely:

- **joint**
- **double/multiple**
- **dual**
- **concurrent.**

Definitions are provided for each of these four terms. These draw on accepted definitions used throughout Europe,<sup>1</sup> to promote international consistency. The term 'concurrent' is new and aims to describe arrangements that differ from those typically covered by European terminology.

The Quality Code does not require the use of particular terminology. This is a matter for each degree-awarding body to determine, based on what works for, and is understood within, their own arrangements. However, the four terms included in this document are defined with a view to establishing a common understanding of qualifications awarded by more than one degree-awarding body. It is anticipated that such a shared understanding will be helpful to students and prospective students. Respondents to the consultation will be asked to comment on the definitions of all four terms.

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<sup>1</sup> See for example <http://ecahe.eu/home/services/publications/guidelines-for-good-practice-for-awarding-joint-degrees/> and relevant Bologna and ENQA publications, such as [www.enqa.eu/index.php/european-approach-for-quality-assurance-of-joint-programmes/](http://www.enqa.eu/index.php/european-approach-for-quality-assurance-of-joint-programmes/).

## The format of this document

This draft document takes the form of a **qualifications characteristics** statement. Such statements describe the distinctive features of certain qualifications within the Qualifications Frameworks and are a key component of Part A of the Quality Code. The statements are intended to support and contextualise the Qualifications Frameworks and complement the qualification descriptors within them. Qualifications characteristics statements already exist for master's degrees, doctoral degrees and foundation degrees (although the latter is currently referred to as a 'benchmark').<sup>2</sup>

This draft document is a new characteristics statement and therefore published as an annotated draft statement. Text in boxes provides information about each section and additional context as necessary; this will not appear in any final document. Elements of the structure will differ from those of other characteristics statements because of the distinctive nature of qualifications awarded by more than one degree-awarding body, and because these qualifications may be located at a range of levels on the Qualifications Frameworks. Nonetheless the overall format is similar, and all statements are key components of Part A of the Quality Code.

### Consultation questions

Is the Qualifications Characteristics statement format appropriate for this document?

Is the title of this document appropriate?

Will this document help to protect the interests of students and prospective students?

Are the three stated aims of this document appropriate?

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<sup>2</sup> A consultation on revised and updated versions of these three statements is taking place alongside the consultation on this document and the two will run concurrently.

# 1 Introduction

1.1 This statement is about the characteristics of various forms of qualifications awarded by more than one degree-awarding body: namely joint, double/multiple, dual and concurrent qualifications. In this document the term 'degree-awarding body' refers both to UK degree-awarding bodies (including all UK universities) and also to international bodies empowered to award higher education qualifications. These latter may not be known as 'degree-awarding bodies' outside of the UK.

1.2 Qualifications awarded by more than one degree-awarding body are distinctive because each involves a UK degree-awarding body working with another degree-awarding body to award one or more qualifications where **both (or all)** organisations exercise their degree-awarding powers in conjunction with each other.

1.3 This is different from arrangements for working with others where the UK degree-awarding body works to provide a programme with a delivery organisation that may not have degree awarding powers or with an organisation that does have degree awarding powers but is not exercising them in this particular instance.

1.4 All forms of working with other organisations to provide higher education fall within the scope of *Chapter B10: Managing Higher Education Provision with Others* of the Quality Code. The Expectation in *Chapter B10* applies to all UK degree-awarding bodies that make awards in conjunction with another degree-awarding body, as well as to other circumstances that involve working with others.

1.5 The explanatory text in *Chapter B10* signals how specific indicators might be applied in the case of qualifications awarded by two or more degree-awarding bodies. This statement provides further information about the specific characteristics of joint, double/multiple, dual and concurrent qualifications.

1.6 The focus of the characteristics described in this statement is the awarding function (rather than the joint delivery of the programme), how this is carried out in the context of different types of qualification and the implications for quality assurance arrangements.

## 2 The context of qualifications awarded by more than one degree-awarding body

### Benefits and challenges

2.1 Awarding a qualification with another degree-awarding body provides numerous benefits. Such arrangements often provide distinctive educational opportunities and a rich and varied learning environment. Where international mobility is a prescribed part of the programme, this can bring students enhanced employment opportunities in a global market. Such arrangements provide opportunities for students to interact with staff and students associated with related programmes in other countries. Working with other degree-awarding bodies can enhance opportunities for research collaborations. Many jointly delivered programmes provide opportunities for students to experience cutting-edge research, and to benefit from distance-learning delivery techniques that are at the forefront of development.

2.2 However, working with another degree-awarding body also presents a number of challenges, as follows:

**i the legal authority to award a qualification jointly (because this represents a pooling of degree-awarding powers) or otherwise to award a qualification with another degree-awarding body**

This applies not only to any international partner awarding body but also to any UK degree-awarding body. The legal authority for UK chartered universities may not be secure unless the charter explicitly permits joint awards. In recent years a number of chartered universities have petitioned the Privy Council to effect such a change to their charter, and this has been granted.

**ii the potential risk to the security of a degree-awarding body's own academic standards**

When there is partnership with a delivery organisation that is not a degree-awarding body, the authority of the sole degree-awarding body is clear. However, in the case of qualifications awarded by more than one degree-awarding body, the academic standards of two or more awarding bodies have to be secured and there is potential for the academic standards of one or more to be compromised. The paramount concern is that the arrangement made between the degree-awarding bodies involved must protect those degree-awarding bodies' academic standards. This may imply that, in certain partnerships, the academic standards set exceed the standards and requirements normally obtained in one or more of the degree-awarding bodies.

**iii the recognition by other jurisdictions of joint, double/multiple and dual qualifications**

Authorities in jurisdictions other than the UK may be concerned where some arrangements have the potential to transgress their own requirements for joint programmes and qualifications. Where authorities in those jurisdictions are taking measures to restrict arrangements that contravene their regulations, it may have the consequence of students being ineligible for a qualification in that jurisdiction and thus having been misled as to qualifications that they might receive.

*Chapter B10: Managing Higher Education Provision with Others* makes clear UK degree-awarding bodies' responsibilities to fully apprise themselves of the legal and regulatory frameworks of the country in which they are operating and of the national or regional qualifications frameworks or requirements. This is particularly important in the context of awarding qualifications with a non-UK degree-awarding body,

where additional stipulations may be made by authorities to those that apply to working with organisations to deliver higher education in that jurisdiction.

**iv providing clarity for students in relation to a variety of arrangements**  
Newer types of arrangement (such as concurrent qualifications – see below for further details) may present further challenges because degree-awarding bodies, their partners, students, employers and other stakeholders need to be clear about what these arrangements entail and how they differ from more established arrangements.

**v the effective monitoring of publicity materials by the UK degree-awarding body and the potential for inaccurate or misleading information**  
If UK degree-awarding bodies have not made clear in certificates and/or records of achievement where a single programme of study has led to the award of more than one qualification by two independent awarding bodies the concern is that the award of two separate qualifications can be misleading as to the study actually undertaken. There may also be consequences for students who may be misled as to whether they may obtain a second local degree in addition to a UK qualification.

*Chapter B10: Managing Higher Education Provision with Others* of the Quality Code indicates that the certificate and/or record of achievement should be clear where a single programme of study and assessed learning leads to more than one separate qualification (using the same credits and learning twice). It is also important that degree-awarding bodies develop very secure systems and processes through which they can jointly produce any joint award certificates without risking their control of their crests, logos, watermarks, holographs and authorising signatures.

## International contexts

2.3 Over the past decade or so, the focus on joint, double/multiple and dual qualifications has been on how these have developed within Europe. This has been largely in the context of the Bologna Process or within the UK where joint qualifications between two UK degree-awarding bodies became more common, for example as a result of establishing joint medical schools or as a result of collaboration in delivering research degree programmes (through doctoral training centres). Some types of these qualifications have also been developed beyond Europe

## Bologna Process

2.4 The UK is part of the intergovernmental initiative commonly referred to as the Bologna Process. The original aims of the Bologna Process were to create a European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and to make Europe's higher education systems more transparent, thus facilitating international recognition of qualifications and creating opportunities for increased student and graduate mobility. Joint qualifications (and specifically joint degrees) are at the heart of the Bologna Process. One of the principal objectives has been the development of innovative, cooperative, cross-border study programmes and joint degrees. The first Bologna ministerial meeting called for the development of 'modules, courses and degree curricula offered in partnership by institutions from different countries and leading to a recognised joint degree' as a way 'to further strengthen the important European dimensions of higher education and graduate employability' (Prague Communiqué, 2001). The Erasmus initiative supported higher education providers across Europe in pooling their academic resources to develop integrated



2.5 study programmes, particularly at master's and doctoral levels.

2.6 Acceptance of joint degrees was initially hampered by legal impediments in some jurisdictions and a lack of recognition by credential evaluators. Successive Bologna ministerial meetings have reiterated the importance of joint degrees, with an additional focus on overcoming legal impediments and recognition challenges. At the 2003 Berlin Higher Education Summit ministers expressed their commitment 'to engage at the national level to remove legal obstacles to the establishment and recognition of such degrees and to actively support the development and adequate quality assurance of integrated curricula leading to joint degrees' (Berlin Communiqué 2003). The Lisbon Recognition Convention called for signatory states to review their legislation 'to improve recognition of joint degrees' (Recommendation on the Recognition of Joint Degrees 2004). Similarly, ministers at the 2007 ministerial meeting in London reiterated this commitment to work at the national level 'to implement fully the agreed recognition tools and procedures and consider ways of further incentivising mobility for both staff and students', including by 'encouraging a significant increase in the number of joint programmes and the creation of flexible curricula' (London Communiqué 2007).

### **Subsequent developments**

2.7 Over time it has become evident that arrangements between degree-awarding bodies for awarding qualifications are becoming more varied, especially in the context of arrangements that extend beyond Europe. Different types of arrangement between degree-awarding bodies are being made, and although many of these use the terms 'joint', 'double' or 'dual' qualifications, they do not always share the pattern of joint, double/multiple and dual awards as they have been practised, defined and embedded within Europe. These newer arrangements can often be described as a single programme of study that is delivered by one provider but leads to two separate qualifications from two degree awarding bodies. Predominantly, they involve bachelor's programmes rather than master's or doctoral programmes (which have been the main focus of the Erasmus initiative). In the majority of cases they are delivered within one jurisdiction; international mobility is not usually a prescribed part of the programme.

2.8 These more recent, and prospective, arrangements involve a spectrum of activities, including those set out in the following paragraphs, 2.8.1 to 2.8.4.

2.8.1 International organisations that have previously delivered, franchised or validated programmes leading to a qualification of a UK degree-awarding body, acquire their own degree-awarding powers but want to continue their original arrangement for the award of a UK degree in addition to providing their own award (for reputational and marketing reasons). Requests can be made from international degree-awarding bodies for 'dual' or 'double' degree arrangements whereby a programme is franchised or validated by a UK degree-awarding body (leading to a UK degree) alongside a qualification offered by the international degree-awarding body. In this scenario, the two degree-awarding bodies operate in parallel and the programme has to satisfy the requirements of each with little or no reference to the requirements of the other. The arrangement is seen to be one of mutual recognition.

2.8.2 Requests can be made from non-UK awarding bodies (in some cases long-standing partners of UK degree-awarding bodies) to be 'accredited' by a UK degree-awarding body so that they have more autonomy to design, approve and oversee the delivery of programmes leading to both a UK degree (with less oversight from the UK degree-awarding body) and to their own qualification.

2.8.3 Articulation agreements between a UK degree-awarding body and another degree-awarding body may be converted into what is referred to as a 'double' degree agreement.

The latter stages of the programme - normally levels 5 and 6 on *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) or Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) levels 9 and 10 on *The Framework for Qualifications of Higher Education Institutions in Scotland* (FQHEIS) - are delivered by the UK degree-awarding body.

2.8.4 '1 plus1' arrangements involving study for a one-year master's programme in the UK plus one year's study (of a two year master's programme ) at an international degree-awarding body leading to two discrete master's awards at an equivalent level.

2.9 Arrangements such as those described in 2.8 may emerge from long-standing collaborations and reflect the need to take account of other organisations as they mature and develop and as educational provision in other jurisdictions evolves.

2.10 The Expectation of *Chapter B10* of the Quality Code precludes situations where non-UK awarding bodies offer fees for their students to receive a UK degree (through some form of 'mutual recognition'), alongside their own qualification, at the end of a programme which they design and deliver. This could amount to awarding a qualification on the basis of negligible input or little control of delivery.

### **Consultation questions**

Does this section accurately reflect the context of qualifications awarded by more than one awarding body?

Should this section provide further guidance in relation to the challenges outlined?

## 3 Forms of award

### A note on the forms of award described in this section

This section defines the four terms used throughout this statement to describe the range of qualifications awarded by two or more degree-awarding bodies. As such, it sets out the various forms that qualifications awarded by two or more degree-awarding bodies can take. More information about the detail of each of the forms is provided in the next section.

As noted previously, the definitions of the forms of award provided here draw on accepted definitions used throughout Europe, based on the assumption that it is important that terms adopted are as far as possible internationally consistent. This promotes compatibility with the European agencies with whom many higher education providers in the UK work.

QAA publishes its own glossary of terms which can be found at [www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us/glossary](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us/glossary). The definitions in this glossary may differ slightly from those presented here. Any changes to the definitions agreed through this consultation will be reflected in updates to the QAA glossary.

Questions about the appropriateness of these definitions are included in the consultation survey.

### Joint qualification

3.1 This is defined as an arrangement under which two or more degree-awarding bodies jointly develop and deliver a single programme (whether taught or research) leading to a single qualification awarded jointly by both, or all, participants. The degree-awarding bodies pool their awarding powers to award one qualification together. A single certificate or document (signed by the competent authorities) attests to the successful completion of this jointly delivered programme, replacing the separate institutional or national qualifications. The defining characteristic here is that this is a joint enterprise from conception to implementation and award.

### Double/multiple qualification

3.2 This is defined as an arrangement where two or more degree-awarding bodies jointly develop and deliver a single programme (whether taught or research) leading to separate qualifications (and separate certification) being granted by both, or all, of them. In some cases, the partners agree to award the same qualification but to issue separate certificates. Each certificate and/or transcript or record of achievement or Diploma Supplement indicates that a jointly delivered single programme is leading to two or more qualifications of the participant partners. Double and multiple qualifications have generally been developed as a result of legal impediments, in some jurisdictions, to a single joint qualification, or as a result of difficulties with the recognition of the certificate and transcript of a single joint qualification.

### Dual qualification

3.3 This is defined as an arrangement where two separate degree-awarding bodies jointly design a programme of study comprising a joint curriculum, which diverges at a given point leading to two entirely separate qualifications awarded individually by the two degree-awarding bodies (and which may be at different levels). The qualifications attest to the successful completion of programmes, with separate programme outcomes. Each degree-awarding body is responsible for its own award. Students who successfully complete the two programmes receive separate institutional or national certificates, one for each of the two

separate qualifications being granted by each of the awarding bodies involved. A distinguishing feature of this arrangement is that the overall study period and volume of learning is longer than for either of the individual awards but typically shorter than if each of the programmes of study had been taken consecutively and applied for separately (because they are designed to lock together).

## **Concurrent qualification**

3.4 This is defined as an arrangement where a single programme of study (which may or may not be jointly designed) is delivered primarily by one degree-awarding body but leads to two separate qualifications at the same or equivalent level from two different degree-awarding bodies. One qualification is awarded by the degree-awarding body that delivers the programme and the other qualification is awarded by the UK degree-awarding body that recognises the programme delivered by the other degree-awarding body. On successful completion of the programme, the student receives two separate qualifications (with typically the same title) from the UK degree-awarding body and the degree-awarding body in the other jurisdiction. Both the certificate and transcript state that a single programme of study (delivered by one provider) is leading to two or more qualifications of different awarding bodies.

### **A note on the double-counting of learning**

Concurrent qualifications raise the question of whether, and to what extent, it is acceptable to count the same piece of learning towards two separate qualifications at the same level (double-counting of credit where credit is being used).

In addition to making the statements above about concurrent degrees, the final version of this document could establish norms for the volume of learning that may count twice - that is, towards the award of more than one qualification at the same level.

Arguments are made that if non-UK awarding bodies are choosing to double-count learning or credit towards a second (concurrent) qualification, this is not the business of a UK degree-awarding body, provided that it is itself securing the academic standards and quality of the UK qualification in an appropriate manner. However, by permitting the same piece of learning or credit to be counted towards two or more qualifications at the same level and in the same subject, UK degree-awarding bodies may be perceived as offering two or more qualifications for the 'price of one'. In any case, degree-awarding bodies should give serious consideration to instances where double-counting is likely to occur and their response to this.

To a certain extent, the issue of double-counting of learning also applies to double and multiple qualifications. However, these issues are partly mitigated by the joint delivery and assessment of the programmes and also by the fact that the majority of these arrangements have arisen because of impediments to the award of a joint qualification (which would be the preferred option) in some jurisdictions.)

## **Consultation questions**

Do the four forms of award identified accurately and comprehensively reflect the range of degrees awarded by more than one awarding body?

Do you agree with the definition of joint qualification?

Do you agree with the definition of double/multiple qualification?

Do you agree with the definition of dual qualification?

Do you agree with the definition of concurrent qualification?

Should this section establish norms for the volume of learning that may count twice - that is, towards the award of more than one qualification at the same level?

## 4 Characteristics of qualifications awarded by more than one degree-awarding body

### A note on this section

The following section provides more detail about how the four forms of qualification identified in the previous section can be managed.

Further discussions are likely to be required during and after the consultation period to refine the detail of this section.

The focus of the characteristics described below is about the awarding function (rather than the joint delivery of the programme), how this can be variously discharged in the context of different types of qualification, and what can therefore be inferred in terms of the quality assurance arrangements.

### Joint qualifications

4.1 This subsection looks at the characteristics of joint qualifications.

#### Programme design and development

4.1.1 A new programme is jointly designed and developed which constitutes a new and distinctive educational programme providing opportunities which, in most cases, none of the partners could offer, in that form, independently of the others. The result is an educational offering enhanced by the contribution of another or multiple partners (often each at the cutting edge of research in their field) and the provision of what might be described as an extended academic community. Such awards therefore can be characterised as representing innovative and exciting educational experiences, mostly, but not exclusively in, an international context. In most cases mobility between partners is a prescribed part of the programme.

4.1.2 Similarly, in the case of research degree programmes, joint supervision is provided by two or more degree-awarding bodies, each of which is able to contribute expertise and a distinctive research environment.

#### Programme delivery

4.1.3 Typically each partner delivers and assesses substantial proportions of the programme. Arrangements for joint doctoral degrees typically involve doctoral students being jointly supervised by supervisors from each of the participant awarding bodies (often in different countries) and receiving skills training from each of the degree-awarding bodies. Both partners are involved in monitoring students' progress and determining whether requirements are met at key milestones. The detail of how the students are supervised is often set out in co-tutelle agreements<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> A co-tutelle agreement is an agreement which relates to an individual student (rather than an agreement relating to a partnership between two awarding bodies to provide joint doctorates). It sets out the respective duties and responsibilities of the two awarding bodies and the rights of the doctoral student in relation to each of these.

## **Assessment**

4.1.4 Each participating degree-awarding body is usually responsible for the assessment of the components of the programme that it delivers. A holistic view of the assessment strategy is taken by the joint authority (see next section) which oversees the programme. In particular a decision is made about whether a single marking scheme will be adopted or whether components of assessed work will be marked in accordance with the local regimes and then rescaled to a single scheme. A conjoint, usually bespoke, examination board (or equivalent) is established to oversee progression through the programme and the award of a qualification. In the case of research degree programmes, joint decisions are reached about the length of thesis and the form of examination that will satisfy the requirements of both or all degree awarding bodies.

## **Governance, management/organisation, and oversight**

4.1.5 The operation of a joint qualification is jointly overseen. This is typically achieved by a joint board or consortium which is established to be accountable to the highest academic authority in the respective degree-awarding bodies. Joint decision making may be formally delegated on a range of matters including approval of and changes to the programme, assessment strategies, appointment of examiners (including external examiners) and changes to regulations. The governance arrangements are approved by the awarding bodies, as are a range of policies and procedures specific to the award of the joint qualification.

4.1.6 Administrative tasks may be delegated to individual partners or may be undertaken by one of the partners acting as a lead institution.

4.1.7 Day-to-day programme management is usually undertaken jointly, with all participating partners represented on a programme team.

## **Academic regulations**

4.1.8 The participating awarding bodies jointly determine which academic regulations govern the award of the joint qualification. In many cases bespoke regulations are agreed and approved by all the participant awarding bodies, ensuring that the academic standards of each of the awarding bodies involved are satisfied. In some cases these may be exceeded to take account of a particular partner's requirements but under no circumstances are they compromised.

## **Quality assurance**

4.1.9 The programme is jointly approved. Where possible this is achieved through an approval event involving representation from all the awarding bodies involved. However this may not be possible under certain jurisdictions.

4.1.10 A collective decision is made about the monitoring and review procedures to be adopted, which satisfies the principles of each of the awarding bodies involved.

## **External examiners**

4.1.11 UK degree-awarding bodies consider what external examining arrangements are appropriate to satisfy the requirements of all the partners involved, the Expectations of *Chapter B7: External Examining* and *Chapter B10: Managing Higher Education Provision with Others* of the Quality Code. Joint or dual appointments may be feasible (and would generally be desirable for joint degrees between two UK degree-awarding bodies).

## **Registration, enrolment and contractual relationships with students**

4.1.12 Typically, a student is registered with each of the awarding bodies awarding the qualification.

4.1.13 In the case of joint doctorates, arrangements may need to take account of the status of doctoral candidates in some jurisdictions as employees of the partner degree-awarding body.

4.1.14 The partners jointly agree the arrangements to consider academic complaints and appeals.

## **Certification and records of study**

4.1.15 On successful completion of the jointly delivered programme, a student receives a single certificate or equivalent document, rather than separate institutional or national qualification certificates. In order to aid qualification recognition, the certificate lists the title of the qualification as recognised in all of the legal frameworks in which the participating degree awarding bodies are based.<sup>4</sup>

## **Double/multiple qualifications**

4.2 This subsection looks at the characteristics of double/multiple qualifications.

4.2.1 Double or multiple qualifications where each partner's usual academic frameworks and regulations apply may circumvent the resource-intensive challenge of creating and maintaining bespoke sets of regulations often required for joint qualifications. On the other hand, designing a programme that meets the academic requirements of multiple partners can in itself present a challenge. Frequently, there is sufficient flexibility in a single set of academic regulations to allow for any variation required for a jointly designed programme that has to satisfy two or more awarding bodies; however many aspects of designing, developing and delivering a double/multiple qualification are similar to those relating to joint qualifications.

## **Programme design and development**

4.2.2 A new programme is jointly designed and developed, constituting a new and distinctive educational programme and opportunities which, in most cases, none of the partners could offer, in that form, independently of the others. The result is an educational offering enhanced by the contribution of another, or multiple, partners (often each at the cutting edge of research in their field) and the provision of what might be described as an extended academic community. They therefore can be characterised as representing innovative and exciting educational experiences mostly, but not exclusively in, an international context. In most cases mobility between partners is a prescribed part of the programme. The overall study period is typically the same as for a single award of the relevant qualification.

4.2.3 Similarly, in the case of research degree programmes, joint supervision is provided by one or more degree-awarding bodies each of which is able to contribute expertise and a distinctive research environment.

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<sup>4</sup> As recommended in the European Consortium for Accreditation (ECA) *Guidelines for Good Practice for Awarding Joint Degrees*, [www.eaconsortium.net](http://www.eaconsortium.net) [www.grossroads.eu](http://www.grossroads.eu)



## **Programme delivery**

4.2.4 Typically each partner delivers and assesses substantial elements of the programme. Smaller proportions would not justify double/multiple qualifications and would more appropriately be dealt with by arrangements for buying-in teaching.

4.2.5 Arrangements for dual or multiple doctoral degrees typically involve doctoral students being jointly supervised by supervisors from each of the participant awarding bodies. The proportion of time spent under the aegis of each degree-awarding body is usually roughly equivalent. Both or all partners are involved in monitoring students' progress and determining whether requirements are met at key milestones. The detail of how the students will be supervised is often set out in co-tutelle agreements.<sup>5</sup>

## **Assessment**

4.2.6 Each degree-awarding body is responsible for the overall assessment strategy leading to its qualification. The programme is subject to that degree-awarding body's assessment regulations. In some cases, all partners may agree a common set of assessment regulations. Each degree-awarding body is normally responsible for the assessment of the components of the programme that it delivers. Marks are then imported by the degree-awarding body. A decision is made about whether a single marking scheme is to be adopted by all participants in the jointly delivered programme or whether components of assessment will be marked in accordance with the local regimes and then rescaled to the scheme of each individual degree-awarding body. Assessment decisions are taken by an examination board which conforms to the requirements of the degree-awarding body. A subsidiary joint board may be established to oversee the confirmation of marks for individual components and determine progression through the jointly delivered programme. The conjoint board reports to the awarding body's examination board.

4.2.7 In the case of research degree programmes, the degree-awarding body's normal academic regulations apply and are met in terms of the thesis and examination arrangements. In order to satisfy the requirements of both or all awarding bodies, additional examination requirements may apply.

## **Governance, management/organisation, and oversight**

4.2.8 The arrangements for double or multiple qualifications are that each degree-awarding body oversees its own qualification.

4.2.9 There may be a consortium or joint programme management board to enable joint decision making about, and management of, the jointly delivered programme on a range of matters. However, this would make recommendations through the normal academic decision making structures of each of the respective awarding bodies. The governance arrangements are approved by the awarding bodies, as are a range of policies and procedures specific to the award of double or multiple qualifications.

4.2.10 Administrative tasks may be delegated to individual partners or may be undertaken by one of the partners acting as a lead institution.

4.2.11 Day-to-day programme management is usually undertaken jointly, with all participating partners represented on a programme team.

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<sup>5</sup> See note 3.

## **Academic regulations**

4.2.12 As individual and separate qualifications are awarded, the academic regulations of each of the awarding bodies apply to the programme (unless the partners agree to adopt a common bespoke set of regulations). The academic standards of each of the awarding bodies involved have to be satisfied. In some cases these may be exceeded to take account of a particular partner's requirements but in no circumstances are they compromised.

## **Quality assurance**

4.2.13 The programme is approved through each degree-awarding body's usual channels for programme approval. A conjoint approval event may be held (although this may not be permitted under some jurisdictions) and its recommendations reported through the normal programme approval processes of each degree-awarding body. UK degree-awarding bodies may accept the detailed approval processes undertaken at module level by partner awarding bodies for the modules or components that those partners are delivering. However, UK degree-awarding bodies retain responsibility for making an assessment as to whether the proposed programme as an entity (and its assessment strategy) delivers and tests programme outcomes at the appropriate level for the award and maintains its own academic standards as a degree-awarding body.

4.2.14 A decision is made about the monitoring and review procedures to be adopted which satisfies the principles of each of the awarding bodies involved. Generally, the usual monitoring and review procedures of each of the partners apply to the component of the programme that they respectively deliver, and the outputs are shared with the other partners. Reports are submitted through each degree-awarding body's own quality assurance framework. A process for periodic review is decided collectively and the outcome reported through each degree-awarding body's own quality assurance framework.

## **External examiners**

4.2.15 The UK degree-awarding body's usual external examining arrangements apply to modules that the degree-awarding body delivers and also with respect to the award of the qualification. Joint or dual appointments are feasible.

## **Registration, enrolment and contractual relationships with students**

4.2.16 Typically a student is registered on the single programme with each of the awarding bodies.

4.2.17 In the case of doctorates, arrangements may need to take account of the status of doctoral candidates in some jurisdictions as employees of the partner awarding body.

4.2.18 The degree-awarding body's usual arrangements for academic complaints and appeals apply. Consideration is given as to how complaints or academic appeals that relate to components of the programme delivered by another partner are to be handled in this overarching context.

## **Certification and records of study**

4.2.19 Students who successfully complete the jointly delivered programme receive separate institutional or national certificates, one for each of the separate qualifications being granted by each of the awarding bodies involved.

4.2.20 Each certificate and/or transcript, record of achievement or Diploma Supplement indicates that a jointly delivered single programme is leading to two or more qualifications of the participant partners.

## **Dual qualifications**

4.3 This subsection looks at the characteristics of dual qualifications.

### **Programme design and development**

4.3.1 A dual qualification is a jointly designed programme of study comprising a joint curriculum that diverges at a given point, leading to two entirely separate qualifications (which may be at different levels), with separate programme outcomes. The two components form a single package of two programmes of study; because of overlap in the curriculum (typically the earlier part), there may be efficiencies in overall learning opportunities. There are aspects in common with articulation arrangements in that the two learning experiences are designed to be paired together and the curricula are aligned. The two programmes may comprise existing programmes that are taken sequentially or that articulate with each other. Alternatively, they may be jointly designed and developed in order to articulate with each other.

4.3.2 A distinguishing feature is that the overall study period and volume of learning is longer than for either of the individual awards but typically shorter than if each of the programmes of study had been taken consecutively and applied for separately (because they are designed to lock together). The result is an educational offering enhanced by the contribution of another partner, mostly, but not exclusively, in an international context. Mobility between the two partners is normally a prescribed part of the programme.

### **Programme delivery**

4.3.3 Typically each partner delivers a substantial part of their programme at the level of the qualification they award. Thus, in the examples above, for dual bachelor's degrees in engineering, each degree-awarding body would deliver material at level 6 of the FHEQ or at SCQF level 10 on the FQHEIS (or their equivalent to this) relevant to their respective qualifications. In the case of the BA/Maîtrise, years one to three of the Bachelor's programme would be delivered in the UK and year four, for the Maîtrise, by the French awarding body.

### **Assessment**

4.3.4 Each degree-awarding body is responsible for the overall assessment strategy leading to its qualification. The programme is subject to that degree-awarding body's assessment regulations. Each participating partner is responsible for the assessment of the components of the programme that it delivers. Marks are then imported from the other partner (as appropriate) by each degree-awarding body for the qualification it awards. A decision is made about whether a single marking scheme is to be adopted by all participants in the jointly delivered programme or whether components of assessment will be marked in accordance with the local regimes and then rescaled to the scheme of each individual degree-awarding body. An examination board is established for each respective qualification

in conformity with the regulations of the degree-awarding body. Assessment decisions are taken by the respective examination boards.

### **Governance, management/organisation, and oversight**

4.3.5 Each degree-awarding body involved in a dual qualification oversees its own qualification. The arrangements are similar to an articulation arrangement where one of the awarding bodies recognises the learning undertaken at the partner degree-awarding body for contribution to its own qualification. The policies and procedures applied are those either for articulation arrangements or for dual qualifications as approved by the degree-awarding body.

### **Academic regulations**

4.3.6 As individual and separate qualifications are awarded, the academic regulations of each of the awarding bodies apply to the respective programmes/qualifications. The academic standards of each of the awarding bodies involved are satisfied.

### **Quality assurance**

4.3.7 The entire programme of study is approved through each degree-awarding body's usual channels for programme approval. Degree-awarding bodies may accept the detailed approval processes undertaken at module level by partner awarding bodies for the modules or components that those partners are delivering. However, degree-awarding bodies retain responsibility for determining whether the proposed programme as an entity (including its assessment strategy) delivers and tests programme outcomes at the appropriate level for its own award and maintains its own academic standards as a degree-awarding body.

4.3.8 A decision is made about the monitoring and review procedures to be adopted which must satisfy the principles of each of the awarding bodies involved. Generally, each partner applies its monitoring and review procedures to the component(s) of the programme that it delivers, and outputs are shared with the other partners. Reports are submitted through each degree-awarding body's own quality assurance processes. A process for periodic review is decided jointly.

### **External examiners**

4.3.9 The UK degree-awarding body's usual external examining arrangements apply, as appropriate, to the modules and level of study that it delivers, and also with respect to the qualification it awards.

### **Registration, enrolment and contractual relationships with students**

4.3.10 Typically a student is registered with each of the two awarding bodies, and registers for the dual programmes as a single entity from the outset.

4.3.11 The degree-awarding body's usual arrangements for academic complaints and appeals apply for each respective qualification. Consideration is given as to how complaints or academic appeals that relate to components of the programme delivered by the other partner are to be handled in this overarching context.

### **Certification and records of study**

4.3.12 Students who successfully complete the two programmes receive separate institutional or national certificates, one for each of the two separate qualifications being granted by each of the awarding bodies involved.

## **Concurrent qualifications**

4.4 This subsection looks at the characteristics of concurrent qualifications.

### **Programme design and development**

4.4.1 A single taught programme of study may be designed and developed by a UK degree-awarding body and then franchised to another provider with awarding powers in its own jurisdiction. Alternatively, the UK degree-awarding body may validate a single taught programme of study designed and developed by an international provider with degree-awarding powers of its own in its own jurisdiction (or they may jointly design and develop the programme). These arrangements may be the result of existing collaborative arrangements that predate the acquisition of awarding powers by the partner.

4.4.2 Unlike with joint, double/multiple or dual qualifications, mobility between the partners is not normally an essential or typical part of the arrangement. The programme of study is typically taken within one jurisdiction.

4.4.3 Degree-awarding bodies determine whether their own academic frameworks and regulations permit the use of assessed learning to count towards more than one qualification in the same disciplinary area (particularly at the same level) and apply those rules consistently (both in the UK and in the context of transnational partnerships). The nature of the concurrent qualifications to be awarded are set out in the formal written agreement between the partners reflecting the UK degree-awarding body's acceptance of the arrangement.

4.4.4 Degree-awarding bodies' academic frameworks and assessment regulations normally preclude doctoral theses being submitted elsewhere for a second qualification.

### **Programme delivery**

4.4.5 The programme is delivered primarily by an international partner and is usually taken in one jurisdiction.

### **Assessment**

4.4.6 Each degree-awarding body is responsible for the overall assessment strategy leading to its qualification, and the programme is subject to each degree-awarding body's assessment regulations for the respective qualifications. Assessment decisions are taken by examination boards that conform to the requirements of the respective awarding bodies.

### **Governance, management/organisation and oversight**

4.4.7 Each degree-awarding body involved in a concurrent qualification oversees its own award. The UK degree-awarding body continues to franchise or validate the programme in accordance with the Expectation of *Chapter B10* of the Quality Code.

### **Academic regulations**

4.4.8 As individual and separate qualifications are awarded, the academic regulations of each of the awarding bodies apply to the programme. In the case of the UK degree-awarding body, the regulations apply in accordance with its usual arrangements for franchising or validation as appropriate. The academic standards of each of the awarding bodies involved have to be satisfied. In some cases these may be exceeded to take account of a partner's requirements but in no circumstances should they be compromised.

## **Quality assurance**

4.4.9 The programme is approved through each degree-awarding body's usual processes for programme approval.

4.4.10 The usual monitoring and review procedures of each of the partners apply to the programme.

## **External examiners**

4.4.11 The degree-awarding body's usual external examining arrangements apply.

## **Registration, enrolment and contractual relationships with students**

4.4.12 Typically a student is registered with each of the awarding bodies awarding a qualification.

4.4.13 The degree-awarding body's usual arrangements for academic complaints and appeals apply. Consideration is given as to how complaints or academic appeals that relate to components of the programme delivered by another partner are to be handled in this overarching context.

## **Certification and records of study**

4.4.14 Separate institutional or national certification for two or more qualifications is granted by both of the awarding bodies for successful completion of the single programme. Each certificate and/or record of achievement or Diploma Supplement makes clear that a single programme delivered primarily by one provider is leading to two or more qualifications of different awarding bodies.

## **Consultation questions**

Are the characteristics of joint qualifications described accurately and appropriately?

Are the characteristics of double/multiple qualifications described accurately and appropriately?

Are the characteristics of dual qualifications described accurately and appropriately?

Are the characteristics of concurrent qualifications described accurately and appropriately?

## Appendix 1: Members of the Advisory Group

We are grateful to members of our Advisory Group for contributing to the development of this statement on joint, double/multiple, dual and concurrent degrees.

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QAA1043 - Dec 14

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Registered charity numbers 1062746 and SC037786