



Designing and managing international relations, education projects and
mobility schemes in Asian Universities

Disclaimer:

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QUALITY PLAN: last updated July 2020



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TOOLKIT QUALITY PLAN

Impact of Coronavirus Pandemic

The Coronavirus Pandemic (C-19) has impacted the Toolkit project in a variety of ways. First, it has meant that since March 2020 no travel for project training or other activities has been possible. Major training activities for WP4 (in Uppsala) and WP3 (in Bologna) were first postponed and have now been taken online. This will impact on the type of training possible, and the opportunity for project team members to visit their European partners and learn from meeting a wide range of colleagues. Secondly, almost all international activities have been cancelled at partner universities: incoming and outgoing project visits, participation in international conferences and networking events, and student exchange of all types have been put on hold – with as yet no clear end-date in sight. Thirdly, and most importantly for the Toolkit Quality Plan, the data for project achievements will either be grossly distorted or non-existent. Student mobility numbers may take years to recover to 2019 levels, which formed the baseline for the project. Equally international projects have largely been postponed, and almost no new agreements have been signed. IRO staff have been deployed on other duties such as developing C-19 safe blended learning modules, and in some cases have been performed at home. The only positive development has been an increase in capacity and skills to use video-conferencing packages, which will benefit international cooperation long after the C-19 crisis has passed. The Quality Plan therefore reflects these new realities.

Introduction

The Quality plan supports the work of TOOLKIT project in the achievement of its wider objective to develop tools for the enhancement and modernization of the internationalization strategies of Asian universities, especially in terms of the capabilities displayed by the university governance and IRO staff in building up an “Asian way” to internationalization.

The aim of the quality plan is establishing criteria, tools and procedures for monitoring and evaluating the project in terms of both processes and outputs. Evaluation and monitoring activities are closely related in particular to the following aspects of the project:

- The process, outputs, and deliverables of each WP
- The general project management (included management bodies meetings, internal communication activities, and financial management)
- The partners' participation in the project operations and the degree of satisfaction of users and target groups
- The visibility of the outcomes and the commitment of partners to articulate and promote them towards other universities, external stakeholders and policy makers to assure the impact of the project on the Higher Education Sector at national level.



The criteria, aims, procedures, tools and indicators for project evaluation were first anticipated during the Kick-off meeting in Bologna in April 2019, then developed and approved by all partners during the Project Meeting held in Vientiane in January 2020.

Uppsala University (UU), University of Peradenya (UoP) and Souphanouvong University (SU) have been elected to form the TOOLKIT Quality Board. The Quality Board is in charge of the overall quality evaluation of the project as well as of liaisons with the external stakeholders to receive their inputs and feedback.

Out of the members of the Quality Board in charge of the coordination of the Quality Plan, it is important to underline that all the partners will have an active role in the quality work involving the whole project teams from the beginning until the end of the project lifetime.

The Quality Plan serves as a common standard to be applied and followed throughout the project lifetime. For that purpose, the Quality Plan states all the procedures and measures to be fulfilled in order to secure that:

- all partners are performing their tasks as agreed in the General Assembly and in the Partnership Management Board meetings;
- all project activities are accomplished in accordance with the plan outlined in the project application;
- all outcomes meet the quality standards set by the Consortium;
- all rights and obligations stated in the Partnership Agreements are satisfied.
- appropriate adjustments to project activities have been made as a result of the Coronavirus Pandemic.

The outcomes of each monitoring activities will be reported by the Quality Board to the General Assembly to adopt correction actions when necessary. The entire process will follow the PDCA cycle:

- PLAN: identify and share the objectives and related activities to be performed
- DO: implementation of the activities
- CHECK: monitoring and evaluation of the achieved results
- ACT: propose adjustments and apply actions for improvements.

The project foresees two types of evaluation: formative evaluation and summative evaluation. These evaluations are carried out both internally and externally.

Formative evaluation

1. Internal formative evaluation (IFE)

The internal formative evaluations will be coordinated by the Quality Board. Notably, five Internal Formative Evaluations (IFE) will be issued by the QB at the end of WP1, WP2, WP3, WP4 and WP5 and the results will be reported to the General Assembly.

The internal evaluations aim at assessing the project performance and its development status according to established performance parameters, baselines, and deliverables as specified in the Logical Framework Matrix (LFM). The ultimate goal will be to report positive accomplishments and negative issues to the General Assembly and to validate completed tasks.



AIM

- To provide an internal evaluation of the project in order to highlight accomplishments and weaknesses;
- To propose any necessary reviews of the project in case of weaknesses;
- To validate completed tasks.

METHODS

It involves the whole project staff and aims at providing a step-by-step internal evaluation of the project to highlight positive achievements and weaknesses, issues that will be solved during Consortium Meetings.

Each IFE will take into consideration:

- compliance with deadlines and project timetable
- delivery of products and reports in accordance with the project plan
- assessment of deliverables against agreed indicators
- respect of the tasks distributed,
- quality in the organisation of the events,
- quality and effectiveness of the internal and external communication
- compliance with budget limitations and, in general, efficient and effective use of resources.

All these aspects will be evaluated by the Quality Board through ad-hoc questionnaires with all project staff and, when needed, with target groups. After every Consortium meeting a questionnaire is sent to all the participants to obtain feedback for future meetings and activities. Participants are strongly encouraged to share their thought on improvements. For this reason the questionnaires, whose aim is to answer the question *“Did the meeting/training/project activity achieve the results it was supposed to achieve?”*, include both questions in an agree-disagree format, and the possibility to give open answers. The questions are divided in three sections: infrastructure, content and results. At the end of each section open questions for feedback are included (please see the annex 1 for questionnaire example and result).

Each IFE will serve to appraise data and information on whether main goals are being met and on how different aspects of the project (such as relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, sustainability) are working. These data and feedback will inform strategic decisions and are therefore essential for future improvement. In addition, the IFEs 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.

The Quality Board will discuss the IFE results with the project coordinator and the Partnership Management Board to envisage opportune adjustments wherever weaknesses, deficiencies, and/or gaps were identified.

The TOOLKIT consortium participated in four Consortium meetings so far:

- Kick-off Meeting in Bologna in April 2019;
- Meeting in Vilnius in October 2019;
- Meeting in Vientiane in January 2020.
- Virtual Meeting in June 2020



2. External formative evaluation (EFE)

External evaluation is an integral part of the Quality Plan. This will allow TOOLKIT Consortium to receive a non-biased external perspective on the project management, progress and impact. It can also provide valuable recommendations for improvement whenever weaknesses and flaws are detected.

The Consortium is working to subcontract 2 external evaluators for a step-by-step evaluation. This formative evaluation aims at measuring the quality of the trainings delivered and of the produced deliverables after each WP. The external evaluators will also assess the expertise acquired by the Asian partners IRO staff, evaluate the impact of project products both on Asian HEIs partners of the project and on the other Institutions of the three involved countries.

In order to monitor whether the project is reaching the expected impact, the external evaluators revise and fine-tune the set of indicators (short and long term) which had been envisaged in the project proposal. These indicators will be employed to gather data to assess the effectiveness and sustainability of the tools implemented in each development WP for project partners and their relevance and replicability in other higher education contexts of the countries involved.

External evaluators have the responsibility to suggest corrective actions if specific outcomes are not produced according to the set of indicators and quality standards.

AIM

To provide a step-by-step external evaluation of the project, highlighting the quality of the outcomes and their impact both on Asian partners and on the whole higher education sector of the three countries.

The evaluators will be in charge of the evaluations of:

- general quality of the trainings,
- expertise in strategizing international actions acquired by University leadership
- expertise gained by Asian IRO staff in the promotion and management of mobility flows and international education projects
- degree of awareness in the university community (professors and students) of the international opportunities
- the impact of the project for the HEIs of the Asian countries involved.
- the adjustments made to the project as a result of the C-19 pandemic.

METHODS

The Consortium appoints two external evaluators.

The following profile has been agreed for the evaluators:

- a solid, diversified experience in the field of education
- experience in the region



- experience with EU funded projects
- fully conversant with the principles and working methods of project cycle management

The first evaluator will be a professional with expertise in the Internationalization of Higher Education. This evaluator will assess the general quality of project trainings and their outcomes such as university updated internationalization plans, Handbook for the international mobility, Handbook for project writing and management.

He/she will also appraise expertise gained by the Asian university leadership and IRO staff in terms of strategic planning, mobility flows, project writing and management through ad hoc interviews and focus groups. He/she will analyse the dynamic of partnership and employed strategies and channels of communication.

The first evaluator will produce a final report on the “technical” WP2, WP3 and WP4.

The second evaluator will be identified among professionals working in NGOs or other entities engaged in cooperation development in the field of education. The evaluator will be asked to measure the impact of the project on the other Universities of the three countries involved and on external stakeholders, being one of the aims of the project to obtain a replication effect on the other Universities of the three Asian countries.

For instance, he/she will assess how dissemination actions (open days, national cascade trainings, discussion meetings with policy makers) will impact on the educational community and direct beneficiaries such as students, rising awareness of the strategic role of the internationalization in modern HE. This evaluator will focus on the outcomes of WP5, WP6 and WP7 and will be in charge of the final summative evaluation.

The formative external evaluators’ reports are going to be distributed to Consortium Assembly meetings and carefully reviewed.

Summative evaluation

1. Internal summative evaluation (ISE)

An internal summative evaluation (ISE) will be planned in the frame of the last project meeting. During this meeting, the project staff will fulfil a conclusive evaluation of the overall project, which aims at highlighting positive accomplishments and flaws/weaknesses, reviewing sustainability measures and the dissemination actions for the communication of TOOLKIT results after its end. It will also include the full set of data required for assessing the results and impacts (see tables below) and an analysis of these data. A final ISE report is produced by the Quality Board to certify the project quality and to be used for future consortium activities. The aim is producing a conclusive evaluation of the overall project by its staff, highlighting either positive accomplishments or weaknesses.

2. External summative evaluation (ESE)

It takes place at the end of the project with the aim of producing a conclusive evaluation of the overall project that will be published and widely disseminated to policy makers and external stakeholders to attest and spread the project’s achievements and build its sustainability and future replication.

This conclusive evaluation will be carried out through interviews and evaluation forms to be delivered among the target groups (Leaders, Academics, Staff, Students, National and Regional Associations and NGOs working



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in the field of education). The evaluator will first measure the internal impact of the project assessing the collaboration activities that Asian partners have established with international partners and the number of faculty members committed to internationalization and students engaged in mobility flows after the three years. Then he/she will identify key lessons and propose suggestions for possible follow-up actions and prospects for extended cooperation of partners beyond project lifetime. Final outputs such as the final TOOLKIT handbook and the policy paper will be evaluated in terms of potential impact they can have in contributing to the debate of the internationalization in the Asian Higher Education Area.

ANNEX

#	Project results	Who will they impact at national, regional level?	How?
1	Co-created and peer-reviewed Internationalisation Strategies adopted and implemented by Asian partner HEIs	Other HEIs, Ministries of Education, local and international NGOs, relevant businesses, regional HEI partners.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cascade training • National conference • Sharing partner HEI websites • Participation in international conferences (EAIE and APAIE).
2	Student Mobility Handbook for partner HEIs developed, published and used by partner HEIs and others.	Senior management and IRO staff at HEIs, Ministries of Education, exchange partner HEIs within and beyond the region. Mobile students who will benefit from improved programmes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cascade training • Sharing handbook with mobility partners in other countries • User-friendly HEI websites for mobile students
3	International Project Management Handbook developed, published and used by partner HEIs and others.	Senior management and IRO staff at HEIs, Ministries of Education, international partner HEIs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cascade training • Sharing Handbook with existing and prospective international partners • Participation in international networking conferences and events
4	Effective and efficient IROs in all partner HEIs.	All staff at partner HEIs. Senior management and IRO staff at non-partner HEIs. International exchange and mobility partner HEIs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cascade training • HEI websites • Day-to-day communication with international partners

#	Short term impact	Target groups/potential beneficiaries	Quantitative indicators	Qualitative indicators
1	Partner HEIs' IROs are managed more efficiently and effectively	Governance and IRO Staff of partner HEIs in Sri Lanka, Laos and Myanmar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FTE staff numbers assigned to IRO • IRO budgets and equipment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ITC management for the IRO including record-keeping
2	Students of Asian partner Universities are more engaged in internationalisation activities	Students of Asian Partner Universities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall numbers of students mobility to and from Myanmar, Laos, and Sri Lanka 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student satisfaction surveys on completion of mobility • User-friendliness of the student-facing parts of the Student Mobility Handbook

				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reports and transcripts from exchange partner HEIs
3	Teaching Staff of Asian partner Universities are more engaged in internationalisation activities	Teaching Staff of Asian Partner Universities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall numbers of staff mobility to and from Myanmar, Laos, and Sri Lanka and international projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Record of permissions to travel (outgoing) • Head of department reporting (incoming)
4	HEIs in Asia are more engaged in IR activities	The Asian Academic Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall performance of Asian Universities in quality rankings: QS, THE and Webometrics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministries and international stakeholders reports

#	Long term impact	Target groups/potential beneficiaries	Quantitative indicators	Qualitative indicators
1	Asian IROs are managed more efficiently	Governance and IRO Staff of Universities of Asian Universities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FTE staff numbers assigned to IRO • IRO budgets and equipment 	Ministries and international stakeholders reports
2	Asian students are more engaged in internationalisation activities	Students of Asian Universities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall number of students mobility to and from Asia • Number of IRO staff across the countries taking the MOOC on mobility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministries and international stakeholders reports • Feedback on the MOOC from those taking it
3	Asian Teaching Staff of are more engaged in internationalisation activities	Teaching Staff of Asian Universities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall numbers of staff mobility to and from Asia and international projects • Numbers of staff taking the Project Management MOOC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministries and international stakeholders reports • Feedback on the quality of the MOOC from participants
4	The consolidation of a diffuse and long-lasting engagement towards	Civil Society in Sri Lanka, Laos and Myanmar	Ministries and international stakeholders' reports	Ministries and international stakeholders' reports



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	<p>HE internationalization strategies in the three countries involved, capable of encompassing not only the academic community, but also local policymakers, economic stakeholders, and civil society</p>			<p>Feedback on the final TOOLKIT handbook/Toolkit methodology from external stakeholders and HEIs in the Region</p> <p>Feedback on the TOOLKIT methodologies from university networks and university associations</p>
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Questionnaire TOOLKIT Vilnius Training and Project meeting

please answer the questions in the sections below

My home university/institution is: *

- Univeristy of Yangon
- Yangon University of Economics
- Yezin Agricultural University
- National University of Laos
- Souphanouvong University
- University of Peradeniya
- University of Kelaniya
- University of Bologna
- Vilnius University
- Uppsala University

Infrastructure and organization 

I was satisfied with the quality of communication and interaction between partners before the training *

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- Neutral

I was satisfied with the training venue and arrangements. *

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Neutral

I was satisfied with the hotel accommodation and transportation. *

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Neutral

Additional comments/questions *

Content: Training on International Strategies at Vilnius University



The training structure and objectives were useful and clear *

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- no answer

The presentations by EU partners on Internationalization strategies were useful and applicable. *

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Neutral

The group work on action plan to build the updated internationalization strategies was useful and applicable. *

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- Neutral

The presentation of WP2 activities after the training and division of tasks among the Consortium was clear and useful *

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Neutral

Please share your positive as well as negative comments on the content. *

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Content: TOOLKIT II Project Meeting




EU Partner presentations on financial management and reporting were useful and applicable *

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- Neutral

Asian partners suggestion on WP2 National Workshops organization were useful and applicable *

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Neutral

Results 

It was clear to me how I and my colleagues had to work with WP 2 *

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- Neutral

It was clear to me how to structure the updated Internationalization plan for my University (for Asian partners only) *

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- Neutral

It was clear to me how my University had to select staff for the organization of the National Workshop and how my University had to engage staff from other Universities in the Country to attend the National Workshop to present the new internationalization strategy to Ministries and other Universities of my Country. (for Asian partners only) *

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Neutral

It was clear to me how to work and to prepare reporting documents. *

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Neutral

Additional comments/questions *

Did this TOOLKIT meeting contribute to your University's development? If so, how? What lessons did you learn? *

Other comments? *

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