

JOINT DEGREE MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION NETWORK
TACKLING CURRENT ISSUES AND FACING FUTURE CHALLENGES

**RECOMMENDATIONS AND GOOD PRACTICES FOR THE
DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF JOINT
PROGRAMMES**

Document developed within the framework of the JOIMAN Network, by the joint effort of the following partners:

University of Bologna (coordinator), University of Padova, University of Science and Technology Lille 1, University of Strasbourg, University of Bordeaux 1, University of Deusto, University of Graz, University of Antwerp, University of Vilnius, University of Iasi, Masaryk University of Brno, University of Lund, University of Bergen, University of Bochum, University of Leipzig.

Introduction

The “joint programme life cycle” can be divided in two main macro phases which are the “**development phase**” and the “**implementation phase**”. A third phase, which is the “marketing of the programme”, can be placed in between, where not considered under the implementation phase. These macro–phases refer to each JP singularly, while the “**role of the institution**”, in the sense of how each institution is capable and prepared to invest in the internationalisation of education and in particular in JPs, is an important factor which is not necessarily directly related to each singular joint programme but which may considerably influence the macro-phases indicated.

Based on the data gathered from the JOIMAN survey and presented and commented in the “JOIMAN Good Practice Report for the Administration and Management of Joint Programmes”, we can assert that **the majority of the actions which could prevent the challenges and problems** arising during the implementation phase, **need to be addressed in the planning** of the programme **or can be prevented thanks to the “role of the institution”** in terms of the policy defined and strategy implemented to support joint programmes.

Therefore, in this paper, we will present all the processes of the implementation phase and **the most challenging issues** which can be met in this phase. Then we will present those actions or issues which can be put in place or addressed during the planning and development of the programme, and finally how the “Institutions” could be prepared to avoid some of those challenges.

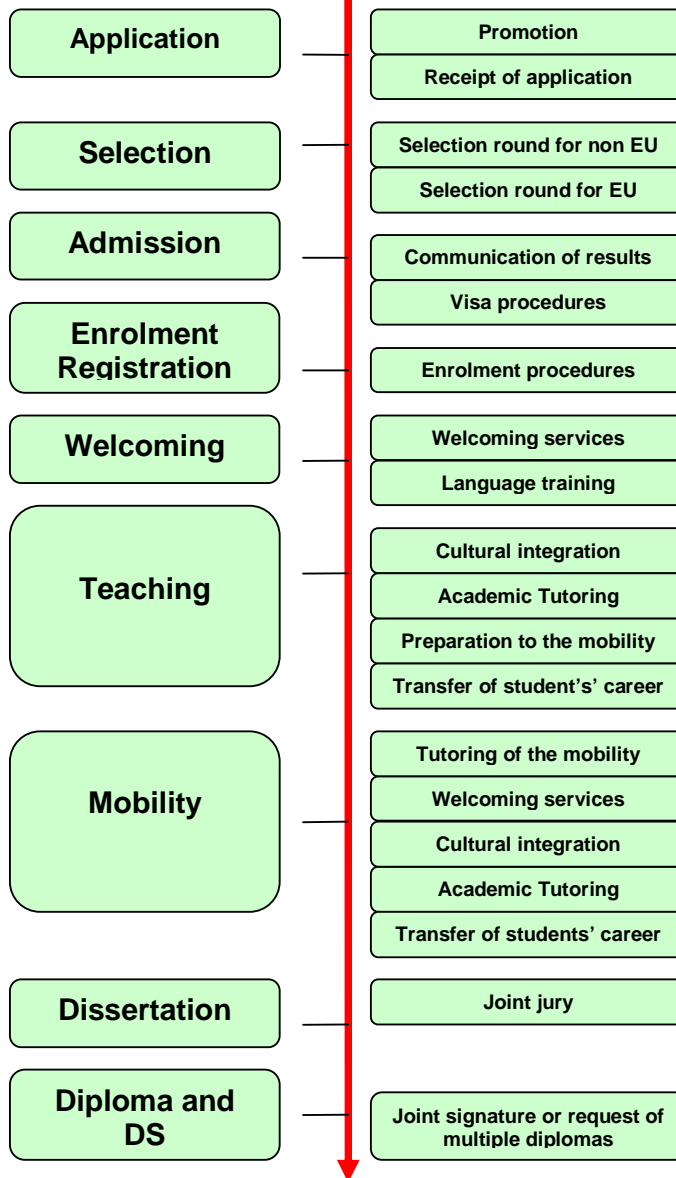
Some good practice examples are also included in between the recommendations within the “boxes”.

The Implementation phase

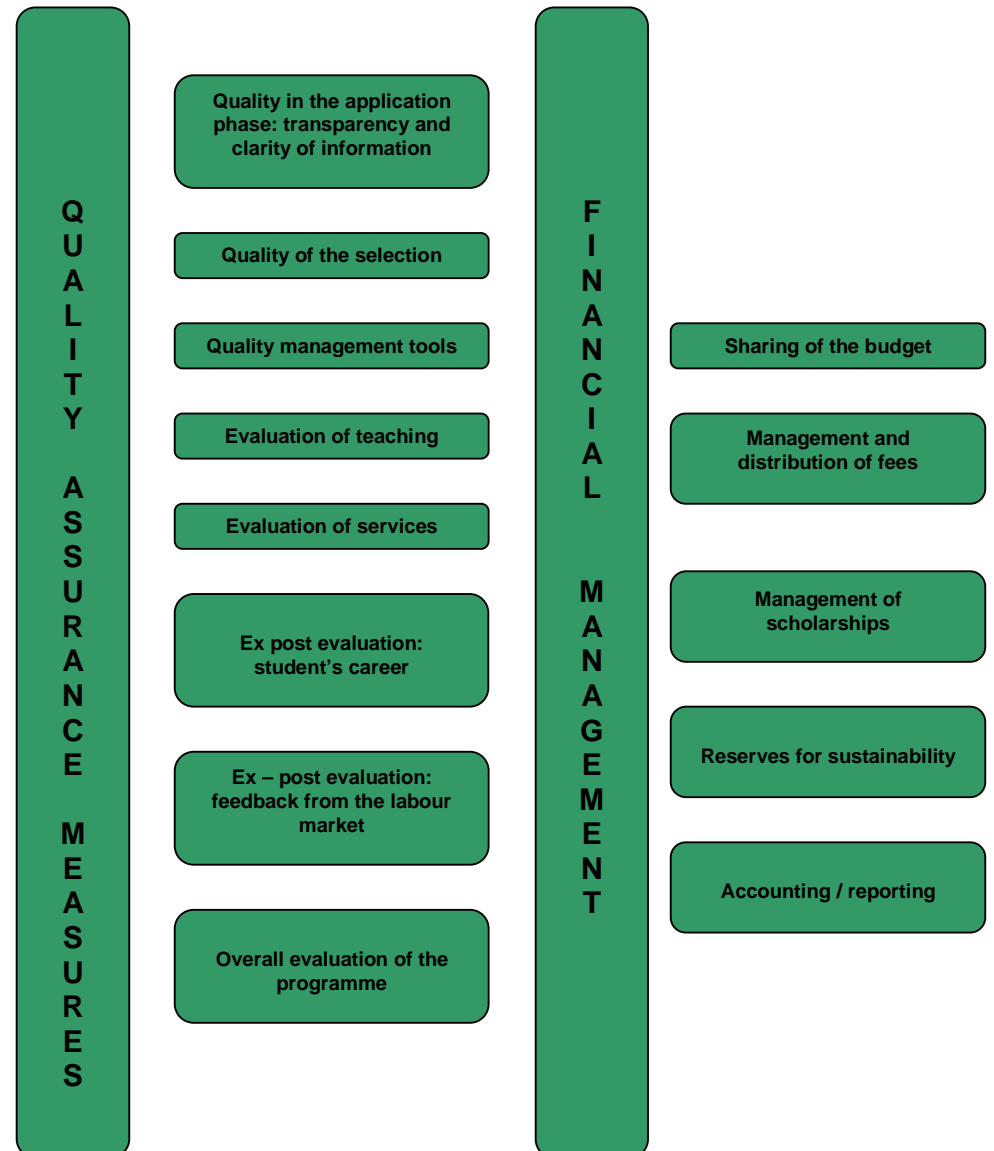
The implementation phase includes what has been defined in the Good Practice Report as the “students’ administration timeline” and, in addition, includes transversal processes which are in place during the entire life of the programme. These transversal processes are the financial management of the programme and the quality assurance measures put in place for the whole management of the programme. The figure on next page represents the implementation phase in graphical terms.

IMPLEMENTATION PHASE

STUDENTS' ADMINISTRATION TIMELINE



TRANSVERSAL PROCESSES



Main challenges during the implementation phase

PROCESSES	CHALLENGES
Application	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Management of applications from different target groups of students ○ Adapting the regular application procedure to the international dimension
Selection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Implementation of a joint selection process and implementation of two-step selection ○ Adapting the regular selection procedure to the consortium needs ○ Assessment of high numbers of applications
Admission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Management of communication flows involving many actors (consortium secretariat, the coordinating institutions, the single institutions, the faculties and, in some cases, the scholarships' donor) ○ Preparation of the documentation for student enrolment ○ Length of procedures for the issue of visa
Enrolment/Registration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Management of joint enrolment procedures ○ Different national or institutional regulations for enrolment documents
Welcoming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Organisation of specific welcoming services such as accommodation, insurance, residence permits etc. ○ Finding additional funds for specific services ○ Adapting regular welcoming services to international/exchange JP students (different level of expectations or academic calendar problems) ○ Cultural integration of international students staying for a short period
Teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Harmonisation of the academic calendars ○ Monitoring and assessment of students ○ Harmonisation of marks ○ Transfer of students records ○ Tutoring and coaching services
Mobility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Organisation of specific welcoming services such as accommodation, practical issues, insurance, residence permits. ○ Finding additional funds for specific services ○ Adapting regular welcoming services to international/exchange JP students (different level of expectations or academic calendar problems) ○ Cultural integration of international students staying for a short period ○ Tutoring and coaching services
Examination regulations and Dissertations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Harmonisation of examination criteria and examination cultures ○ Organisation of joint jury ○ Harmonising "dissertation" systems
Diploma and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Issuing of joint diploma (difficulties due to national legislation or

Diploma Supplement	institutional regulations) ○ Issuing of the double/multiple diploma ○ Awarding of a joint DS ○ Timing for award of joint diploma or in the awarding of DS
Financial management	○ Definition of (common) tuition fees (national regulations or institutional constraints) ○ Definition of a JP budget ○ Management/distribution of tuition fees or of the JP budget ○ Finding financial support for the programmes in terms of scholarships or human resources ○ Calculation of costs and in the reserves for sustainability ○ Reporting/accounting phase when requested by donor
Quality Assurance	○ Ensuring quality in the admission and selection procedures ○ Ensuring transparency ○ Setting up of an evaluation system for the teaching and for the evaluation of services ○ Setting up an overall monitoring and evaluation system ○ Setting up ex – post evaluation ○ Involvement of relevant stakeholders in the overall evaluation

Recommendations and good practices for the development phase of a JOINT PROGRAMME

a) The importance of the selection of partners

1. When planning a joint programme, one should set the criteria for selecting partner(s) beforehand.
2. When setting your criteria for selecting a partner, one should include administrative aspects as well. The academic criteria are essential, but not sufficient.
3. Mutual trust is essential for the development of successful joint programmes, , it is therefore recommended to involve long term collaborative partners assessed both at academic and administrative level.

Good Practice 1: Participation in HE networks

As a starting point for collaboration, in addition to the research links established by single academics, It is also important to underline the usefulness of the participation in HE Networks (i.e.: Utrecht Network, the Coimbra Group, the Compostela Group, the Santander Group etc) in which there is an institutional participation which can facilitate the development of successful JPs. Networks are also important to develop common tools and shared understandings

b) Verification of national legislation and educational systems

4. Having selected the partners, before starting the development phase it is important to be aware of the national situations of the partners involved and in particular:
 - It is important to check the educational systems of the partners/Countries involved.
 - It is important to check the accreditation system of the (joint) programme in the partners/Countries involved.
 - It is important to check the legal situation of the partner involved in relation to the awarding of joint diploma.
 - It is important to check the legal situation of the partners/Countries concerned in relation to tuition and other fees and social cohesion.

Good practice 2: How to verify these issues?

- Involvement of the administration of the partner concerned
- Involvement of the ENIC-NARIC centres or the Erasmus Mundus National Structures of the Countries involved
- Checking the EURYDICE database on European Educational Systems (Eurybase http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/eurybase_en.php#italy)

c) Ensuring Institutional commitment

5. Ensuring the institutional commitment from all partners is crucial. Only with a strong institutional commitment is it possible to bring problems to the decision making tables.
6. Institutional commitment is necessary for obtaining the necessary institutional support in terms of human resources, direct funding, scholarships or services to international students. It is indeed very important that each partner be committed to invest means (either money or infrastructure/ personnel) and that not only “people” are involved, but rather the Institutions as a whole.
7. Institutional commitment is also required if the joint programme requires adaptations of institutional regulations or special deviations to allow the consortium rules to prevail over institutional ones.

Good practice 3: How to obtain institutional commitment?

- Study visits to partners institutions before the development of the programme
- Cooperation agreement must be negotiated during the development phase. Adjustments to the agreement could be applied during the implementation phase
- Involvement of the administration in the development phase
- Involvement of the academic boards

Good practice 4: Visits to institutions?

One of the visited institutions reported that the quality assurance office is in charge of the institutional visits to partners, before the development of the project, in order to ensure that the partner meets the quality standards of the visiting institution and in order to check or obtain the necessary institutional commitment from the central administration, from the faculties and from the administrative units involved.

This approach generates additional costs for the institution but the cost – benefit ratio is positive.

d) Involvement of Stakeholders

8. Stakeholders at national and local level need to be involved in order to advocate the necessary changes in the national procedures and to adapt regulations to innovation (e.g. modification of national regulation on the issuing of joint diploma).
9. Stakeholders are also important as a support to institutions in the process of raising awareness among students and in the labour market on the existence and value of a joint diploma.

e) Establishing cooperation with external services or institutions

10. In order to facilitate the solution to the issuing of visa and the residence permit, it is important to establish cooperation with National Agencies/Structures, with Ministries of Foreign Affairs and with consulates around the world.

11. It is also important, for those countries where residence permits are an issue, to establish cooperation or special agreements with local offices in charge of issuing the residence permit.

Good practice 5: Erasmus Mundus National Structure

Some good practices have been put in place by Erasmus Mundus National Structures which usually collaborate with JP coordinators and institutions, being a sort of “trait d’union” with the consulates all around the world.

As for EMMC the list of selected non EU students is ready some months before the start of the programmes, some EM National Structures request those lists every year from JP coordinators and communicate the lists to the consulates in advance.

This practice can also be adopted by single institutions running non EM Programmes, providing that they anticipate the selection process of non EU students.

Again the propulsive and innovating role of the Erasmus Mundus Programme is remarked, but at the same time JPs which are “outside” of the EM club do not benefit from the same support.

f) Financial management: creating a budget of the programme and calculating costs

12. Even if it could be a difficult process, being aware of the full costs of a programme could serve for the negotiations of the budget. Full costs calculation include personnel costs as well as the costs for rooms, communication and travel. Where full costs calculation is not possible, a detailed list of additional costs should be provided by all partners.
13. Plan reserves or other means to sustain the programme (e.g. contact with funding organisations, business) from the beginning. This could also influence the curriculum (labour-market relevance).
14. The income within a consortium should be distributed among the partner institutions according to their actual full costs and their contribution rather than institutional or legal regulations. If this is not possible within a shorter period of time, then in the long run there should be means to balance it sufficiently.
15. A scholarship scheme should be implemented in order to attract the best students (performance-based allocation as the dominant criterion) and support social cohesion. The scholarships should be as high as the average scholarship rate for students in that region, they should not be higher than the average living costs for students in that particular region.
16. The budget needs to be constantly monitored and transparently managed.
17. Check in the negotiation phase if your institution will have to grant a derogation or a special approval for the modification of tuition fees (harmonisation with other partners, special conditions on student’s nationalities etc.)

g) Setting up a quality assurance system

18. The adoption of ENQA standards is recommended; for JP development and management, refer in particular to their Part 1: “European standards and guidelines for internal quality assurance within higher education institutions”, and Part 1.2 “Approval, monitoring and periodic review of programmes and awards”.
19. Having a periodic evaluation and follow-up systems (like a quality assurance committee, a joint board, students evaluation and assessment).
20. An effective, updated and comprehensive evaluation systems is a crucial tool for the success of a joint programme.
21. The system should include regular evaluation of the academic activities as well as of services.
22. Evaluation should be made by different stakeholders, including the students and the academic staff, as well as labour market which is essential for the adjustment of the curricula.
23. Guarantee the flexibility of the curriculum, allowing adjustments according to students’ and labour market’ needs.
24. Guarantee quality in the selection process and in services, in particular in the very important issue of tutoring and coaching.
25. Development of an online tool for the whole management of the JP, including students’ careers.

Good practice 6: A good example for monitoring the programme

“The Joint programme board organises a yearly “evaluation and planning meeting” with each local coordinator. They report on the teaching delivered by their staff members. These reports are compared with the student evaluation forms which evaluate each course. Afterwards, the JP board makes recommendations on the teaching in each partner university. These recommendations are sent to the partner university for official approval.

The student evaluation also allows monitoring of other aspects of the JP: “information given to students, the organisation of tests and exams, the perceived workload, tutoring offered, accommodation issues, etc.”.

Each local coordinator has a strong relationship with the overall academic coordinator in this HEI. In case of change in the academic staff at the local institution, the local coordinator and overall coordinator have to make sure that the new teacher is well informed of the structure of the JP”.

h) Setting up specific services in support to mobility

26. To set up a clear information system on the JPs including clear explanations about their organisation and the different mobility options (practical guidelines about the different possible tracks).
27. To provide individual counselling to students to choose their track since the choice of the host university is not (only) linked to the attraction of the city/region/country but has to be linked to the study programme offered there.
28. Organisation of extra-curricular activities to foster social and cultural integration.
29. Creation of synergies between the Joint Programmes at the institution in order to instil a “community spirit” among students and academics.
30. Integration of the JP students in the activities organised for the exchange students.

Good practice 7: Involvement of students or alumni

As shown by study visits, a good practice for the organisation of extra-curricular services is the involvement of students or alumni organisations which could provide additional services with very limited additional costs and which could improve the integration of the international students with the local students.

i) Division of roles within the partnership

31. Roles and the tasks of each actor involved (coordinator, institution, faculty, administrative units involved etc.) should be defined during this phase.
32. Work jointly and create synergies between different offices (IRO, student affairs, financial, faculty) and involve them from the start of the project.
33. Organising meetings at technical and political levels, involving different services (students affairs office, IRO, external service for accommodation) to guarantee political support and implement the correct procedure.

l) Negotiations on procedures

34. Clarifying if the implementation of an application procedure managed at consortium level could substitute the regular application procedures applied to each partner's institution.
35. When addressing international students from all over the world, it is important to use an online application. The consortium should discuss how to implement and financially and technically support this.
36. Involvement of registrar offices since the development phase of the programme is important, especially if the institution has no great experience in joint programmes, in order to avoid students being rejected for formal requirements after having been selected by the consortium or by the first enrolment institution.

37. Discussing and harmonising the formal requirements for enrolment ensuring that students can obtain access to services and to certification at each institution.
38. Discussing in detail the documentation required by each institution for enrolment (certificate of previous studies, declarations from the consulates, official translations).
39. Mutual trust for enrolment: do not require additional documents at the second enrolment or registration.
40. To properly adopt, with statistics carried out at faculty or programme level regularly, the ECTS grading scale for the conversion of marks. While this is not possible, the use of converting tables developed ad hoc could be a valid alternative.
41. Have a common follow-up tool which enables the centralisation of data, made available to all partners.

Good practice 8: Online application procedures

Online application based on databases where students can upload application files and which can be accessible to all partners can facilitate and speed up the selection procedure. Many of these systems are based on open source platforms and can be implemented rather cheaply.

Furthermore, a lot of expertise has been shared recently among Erasmus Mundus and above all EM External Cooperation Window Consortia.

Good practice 9: Development of student's agreement

A good practice implemented by almost all the Erasmus Mundus consortia is the student's agreement. This contract usually covers issues such as fees, scholarship, "code of honour" which includes duties and responsibilities of the parties, learning agreement and mobility scheme. This tool is a transparency tool for the students but it is also a tool to enhance the institutional commitment of the partners.

Good practice 10: Management tool and intranet spaces for students, academics and administrative staff

Many JPs have implemented a website with intranet access for both scholars and students. On the intranet, the students can register for all courses and modules and in some cases they can check their results online. These web portals are managed by the coordinating university which is in charge of the student database.

Results of a study visit shown how one consortium has developed an online management tool for their JP. With this system, all the partners have access to the students' information. Data can also be exported and this can facilitate the award of certifications. This management tool, which can be used for the general management of the programmes as well as of the student's career, reduces the workload and permits more effective monitoring and quality control.

m) Developing a good, comprehensive cooperation agreement

42. A cooperation agreement should be developed and negotiated during the development phase.
43. The cooperation agreement should include all the agreements undertaken and should include regulations on the curriculum but also on administration.
44. The cooperation agreement should include financial management issues.

Good practice 11: the JOIMAN cooperation agreement template

The JOIMAN project has developed a cooperation agreement template which introduces the meaning of this tool and includes and explains possible topics. This template can be adapted by Higher Education Institutions and can be used as a tool for planning and negotiating administrative issues during the development phase.

Recommendations and good practices for the “role of the institution”

n) Develop a strategic policy on joint programmes at institutional level

45. A strategic policy on JPs adopted at the highest level of an institution seems to contribute to a systematic development of JPs. A strategic policy anchors the development and running of JPs within the institution at the highest level.

Good practice 12: Models and meaning of strategic policy on JPs

These models have been extracted from the results of surveys and study visits and have been explained in chapter 4.

Top-down approach: developed from the highest level of the institution and then spread inside the institution. So for instance, one HEI has developed a JP policy, has then integrated it in its general policy documents, and finally has disseminated a “JP culture” to faculties and departments.

Bottom-up approach: a strategic policy is developed *after* the institution becomes involved in JPs in order to streamline and frame the development of new JPs. Such a policy might also be defined in order to help the existing JPs to run more smoothly.

The strategic policies can have different emphasis:

- They might stress the administrative side and hence limit themselves to defining a *framework*
- They might *add an incentive to work inside a framework*
- Or else they might aim at *rationalizing* the development of JPs, by creating an appropriate professional culture

It does not seem out of place to cite here an excerpt from one of the study visits, which shows how a JP can have an impact on an institution or a Faculty:

“[...] These two programmes brought a very important change in the culture of the Faculty [...]. They brought an important impulse to the internationalisation culture (courses in English, international dimension, etc.), but also to the whole organisation of the Faculty (dedicated tutor for international students, coaching for social integration, dedicated fund for the running of the international programmes).”

O) Develop a framework to sustain joint programmes in the long term

46. Create units dedicated to the development and management of JPs (within/attached to IROs or quality units). Their goal is to support and frame initiatives in a professional way.
47. Provide additional funding in terms of scholarships or other kind of direct or indirect support
48. Provide required professional training to administrative staff to carry out specialised tasks.
49. Spread the QA culture within the institution.

Good practice 13: Financial support from the institution

The study visits have shown that some HEIs provide (special) scholarships to students enrolled in a selected group of JPs (determined at institutional level). One institution, in particular, increases the LLP/Erasmus scholarship up to € 550 for all European students enrolled in a JP (EMMC and non EMMC). This practice increase the balancing between EU and non EU students in JP and fosters the cultural integration of international students.

Another kind of institutional support shown by the survey is a financial support transferred to the Faculties running Joint Programmes matching the quality requirements defined (teaching units taught in a foreign language, a minimum percentage of international students enrolled, the presence of international visiting professors, a dedicated tutor etc.).

Finally In two cases shown by a study visit and by the survey, a less direct financial support is provided to international programmes in the form of a “special agreed distribution of the tuition fees” among the central administration and the study programme. In these cases the study programmes are conceived as “autonomous” and they can count on a percentage of the fees (80 – 85%) for running the programmes. These funds are additional funds to be added to the costs incurred by the institution for the provision of the regular services (teaching rooms, academic personnel, student’s services) and are generally used for additional services for international students or for scholarships.

50. Provide internal guidelines on how to develop and manage joint programmes to be used as a development tool, as a monitoring tool and as a flexible tool for negotiations among the partners.

Good practice 14: Example of policy developed

[We have developed a] policy rather than a strategy with a very large scope. The policy contains a guideline, which addresses all elements of a JP from the first idea about the programme up to the JD certification and alumni network:

[Its] main aspects [are]:

1. Academic aspects
2. Financial aspects
3. The aspect of sustainability of the programme at all partner universities.

[We favour a] professional/well organised approach to developing JPs, e.g. by developing a business plan for each JP. One basic rule to implement a JP is: solve all problems before the programme starts.

The main conditions that need to be fulfilled are:

*Insure full financial coverage of the programme, at all partner institutions;
Organise site visits to the partners prior the start of the programme to check institutional commitment;
Perform a diligence investigation of all partners (including an investigation of the legal framework).*

Good practice 15: Guidelines developed by the University of Lund

The most complete guidelines are those from the University of Lund, which address all main points that one has to take into account for setting up and running a JP. These guidelines are also reported integrally as an annex of this Report. References are given to the main sources of information and ideas are put forward for those seeking financial support. The tone of the document is not emphatic and has no promotional objective.

Synthesis of the phases and of the tools

