

**Guidelines for the Establishment and Evaluation of  
International Double degree and Joint degree Programs at TU Dresden**  
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## 1. Defining terms and outlining the objectives and types of international degree programs

### 1.1 Differentiation by degree type

In international degree programs, a distinction is made between double degree programs and joint degree programs with regard to the degree awarded. Upon completion of a double degree program, two degrees are awarded by the respective partner universities. Each participating university issues a separate degree certificate. A joint degree is reflected by awarding one degree jointly by all participating institutions. However, it is important to note that a 'degree' is an award, not the document (the diploma) providing evidence of having obtained the degree.

### 1.2 Differentiation according to the structure of the degree program

In terms of the structure of these international cooperation programs, a further distinction is made between joint and shared programs. Depending on which program is chosen, different organizational steps are involved.

#### 1.2.1 Joint programs

Joint double degree programs and joint degree programs refer to programs in which students earn a double degree or a joint degree at both partner universities by completing a jointly structured degree program designed by two or more partner universities in close cooperation. Rather providing the opportunity to study abroad as part of one's studies at their university of origin, this involves fixed components of the degree program agreed upon between the universities, which must be completed as part of a joint degree program at the respective partner universities and are "designed exclusively for the purpose of earning a double degree or a joint degree."

The Saxon Study Accreditation Ordinance ("Sächsische Studienakkreditierungsverordnung") specifies the following characteristics for joint degree programs in § 10, para. 2:

- an integrated curriculum,
- a proportion of studies at one or more foreign universities of usually 25 percent,
- a contractually stipulated collaboration,
- agreements on admission and examinations,
- joint quality assurance.

#### 1.2.2 Shared programs

Shared programs do not constitute degree programs that have been collaboratively designed by universities. The partner universities offer two independent degree programs with autonomous curricula that can be studied in full at the respective home universities. In accordance with the admission requirements, however, these degree programs can also be completed as double or joint degree programs if desired. Students can decide for themselves, whether they wish to acquire only one degree from their home university or whether they wish to acquire a double degree or joint degree. If the course components agreed upon between the universities are studied at the respective partner university, the graduate either receives one university degree

each from their home university and the foreign partner university (in the double degree program) or their home university awards them a joint university degree with the partner university (in the joint degree program).

## 2. Legal basis of double degree and joint degree programs

### 2.1 Awarding degrees

According to § 18 para. 1 sentence 5 of the German Higher Education Framework Act (HRG) in conjunction with § 41 paragraph 3 of the Saxon Higher Education and Research Act (SächsHSFG), degrees other than those listed in the HRG/SächsHSFG may be awarded by a German higher education institution on the basis of an agreement with a higher education institution outside the Federal Republic of Germany. The decisive requirement, however, is that only one degree is awarded for an academic achievement, for instance by issuing a joint certificate or by linking separate certificates. Furthermore, awarding a double degree and/or joint degree must also be permissible in the partner country.

### 2.2 Waiving fees

In § 12 paragraph 5 of the Act on the Freedom of Universities in the Free State of Saxony, it is also stipulated that fees are to be charged for the degree program if it is funded in accordance with a program of the European Union which involves the charging of fees. If the European Union decides that the degree program is not to be funded or that funding is to be discontinued, tuition fees will no longer be imposed as of the beginning of the academic year following the decision. This applies, for example, to Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degree Programs.

### 2.3 Accreditation

For degree programs offered jointly by two or more universities in cooperation, the universities awarding the degrees are responsible for the implementation of the program and ensure its quality. In order to meet these requirements, quality assurance should also be carried out jointly and the degree program should be improved in a coordinated manner. Various national requirements as well as state approval and accreditation requirements have made these agreements more difficult. In 2015, the European Ministers of Education at the Bologna Follow-up Conference in Yerevan endorsed the "European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programs," which is intended to facilitate joint quality assurance of joint programs in the European Higher Education Area with standardized specifications and criteria based on the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance.

However, the European Approach has been only partially implemented by individual member states of the European Higher Education Area. Adherence to the European Approach is not obligatory. In Germany, the European Approach may only be applied to joint programs leading to a joint degree, but not to double degrees or multiple degrees.

#### 2.3.1 Accreditation of degree programs with double degrees or multiple degrees

The European Approach cannot be applied to cooperation models in which universities only cooperate in awarding credits for academic competencies, but do not have a joint curriculum. For these degree programs, the "normal" German accreditation criteria and quality objectives of TU Dresden apply. Particular attention should be paid to special mobility requirements, advisory

services and the regulations for recognition of credits (quality objectives 4.1, 4.3 and 4.4) as well as the regulations in the cooperation agreement (quality objective 9.1) for these degree programs. The implementation of these quality objectives will be evaluated as part of the program evaluation (see also 4.4 Quality Assurance).

### 2.3.2 Implementation of the European Approach for Joint Degree Programs according to § 10 paragraph 2 of the Saxon Study Accreditation Ordinance (SächsStudAkkVO)

When coordinating the joint quality assurance of the participating partner universities, the first step is to establish what the implementation status of the European Approach is in the individual countries<sup>1</sup> and what the national requirements for accreditation are, i.e. whether accreditation is mandatory and whether a program must be accredited. As a university with system accreditation, TU Dresden can decide whether it wants to apply the European Approach (and thus §§ 10 and 16 of the SächsStudAkkVO) as a standard of assessment. Alternatively, an evaluation according to the normal German criteria and the quality objectives of TU Dresden is also permissible. This is especially recommended if the accreditation is also intended to serve as proof of the legal eligibility of a degree program under professional law. In this case, the right of TU Dresden to conduct self-accreditation does not extend to the partner universities.

At TU Dresden, the implementation of the European Approach through an internal review procedure is still in the planning stage and a final decision on its usage has not yet been made. In the event that the decision is made in favor of the European Approach, the principles of quality management for teaching and learning at TU Dresden must be changed.

If an assessment pursuant to the European Approach is chosen, there are several possible options based on the explicit requirement of a program accreditation at one of the partner universities:

- If no partner university requires program accreditation and the European Approach has been implemented nationally in all partner countries, the criteria of the European Approach can be applied merely through the mechanisms of the internal QM systems. In this case, it would not be necessary to abide by the procedure according to § 33 MRVO or to obtain recognition by the Accreditation Council.
- If no partner university requires program accreditation, but part of the European Approach has not yet been implemented nationally, which means that national accreditation requirements continue to apply, the degree program must fulfill both the criteria of the European Approach and the applicable national requirements. In this case, TU Dresden must ensure the implementation of the European Approach with the help of the internal QM system. The partner universities are responsible for the fulfillment of the applicable national requirements.

If program accreditation is still required in a partner country, the following distinctions must be made:

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<sup>1</sup> To see the implementation status of individual countries, visit: <https://www.eqar.eu/kb/joint-programmes/national-implementation/>

- If permitted nationally, the partner universities can opt for program accreditation according to the European Approach. This means that the quality assurance for this degree program is carried out externally by an accreditation agency and not via the internal QM mechanisms of TU Dresden. In this case, the procedure and requirements according to § 33 MRVO must be observed. This means that approval of the assessment by the Accreditation Council is required in particular.
- If, according to the requirements of a partner country, program accreditation is required based on national accreditation requirements rather than the European Approach, program accreditation according to the European Approach can still be carried out in combination with an assessment according to the national criteria of the partner country in question. The procedure and requirements according to § 33 MRVO must also be observed in this case.
- If a partner country requires a degree program to be accredited not according to the European Approach but according to national accreditation requirements, the degree program can alternatively be assessed by TU Dresden according to its internal QM procedures for compliance with the criteria of the European Approach. In this case, adoption of the results of the foreign assessment is possible in full or in part, provided that it is carried out in a defined procedure and according to defined criteria.

### 3. Implementation of international cooperation programs at TU Dresden

The following is a selection of fundamental information on the implementation of international cooperation programs at TU Dresden.

Before implementing international cooperation programs, all stakeholders at the universities must agree that they wish to establish them together on a long-term basis. The process of implementation is lengthy – assume that it will take at least one year. If a degree program is to be newly established, assume at least 2 years. The bundling of resources and funds as well as personnel entailed requires a clear calculation.

The individual stages in this guide are not to be regarded as sequential items to be checked off a list. Individual steps in the process can be addressed concurrently. The cooperation agreement formalizes the resulting program between the partner universities and is thus the most important document with regard to the agreement between the involved parties. The degree program-specific study and examination regulations are the most important documents for creating the legal basis for students. Generally, these have to be adapted when an international cooperation program with a double degree or joint degree is established (see chapter 4.2).

Essential issues in terms of the benefits/added value of the planned cooperation program are:

- 1) What is the reputation of the partner university?
- 2) Is it among the leading academic institutions in the country/subject area?
- 3) What are the benefits of closer cooperation for TUD?
- 4) Does the demand of students, from both directions, justify the effort required to establish and negotiate an international cooperation program?
- 5) Long-term interest, commitment and engagement of the involved chairs/institutes and

administrations of both institutions.

6) Matching admission requirements and prerequisites (this is to be verified in each case by the International Office).

### 3.1 Internal process for establishing an international, multilateral degree program:

- 1) A professor is approached by a partner university or decides on their own to develop a joint or double degree program
- 2) This individual verifies the usefulness of the new degree program to be established and the academic quality of the institution in consultation with the International Office (IO) (see Basic Questions on Benefits and on Drafting the Contract)
- 3) They bring the request to the Faculty Board, which must approve it.  
The first official step of the implementation takes place at the faculty level. Since each faculty has its own procedures, it is advisable to make initial arrangements with the Dean's office, both in terms of formalities and content.  
An essential part of the implementation at the faculty level is that all persons and/or institutes involved have an influence on the decision to establish an international cooperation program. As a rule, this must be affirmed at a minimum by a resolution of the Faculty Board.  
If a change in the course-specific examination and study regulations is necessary, this also requires a resolution of the Faculty Board. The resolution can be obtained jointly. The Chief Officer Technology Transfer and Internationalization (CTIO) then informs the University Executive Board (via the International Office) about the planned establishment of an international cooperation program before the cooperation agreement is signed.
- 4) A Program Officer for the double degree project is appointed
- 5) An initial draft agreement is prepared
- 6) After review and approval by Unit 8.3 (in consultation with Unit 8.4 for modifications to the study documents, if necessary), the project is forwarded to the University Executive Board by the CTIO.
- 7) If the University Executive Board approves the project, the cooperation agreement can be negotiated and signed with the partner institution. The cooperation agreement is signed by the CTIO on the TUD side.
- 8) The new program will be included in the examination and study regulations and announced on websites and in flyers.

### 3.2 Necessary modifications to the study documents

In close consultation with the International Office (Unit 8.3), the Unit for Study Programs Affairs (Unit 8.4) has agreed on the following guidelines for this issue:

Based on the degree programs of TUD, cooperation with other universities is feasible when relevant components of a given program can be completed at the partner university. Depending on the extent of the cooperation, this can also lead to a double/multiple degree or even to a joint degree being awarded. Frequently, the individual course components of the partner university are linked together by an overarching degree program. Generally, each cooperation is based on its own agreement.

For TUD's study documents, the following sample formulations are suggested:

1.
  - a. A mobility window (supplement to § 6 para. 1 of the study regulations)

"(1) [...] In addition, within the framework of the cooperation with #Name#, there is the possibility of being hosted by a cooperation partner in accordance with the cooperation agreement."

b. The duration, structure and scope of studies (supplement to the corresponding paragraph in § 2 of the examination regulations, see the sample examination regulations supplementing the framework examination regulations at tud.de/bologna/arbeitshilfen)

"(2) [...] In addition, within the framework of the cooperation with #Name#, there is the possibility of completing the #x semester# with a cooperation partner in accordance with the cooperation agreement."

2.

a. Awarding degrees jointly (supplement to the relevant paragraph in § 2 of the examination regulations, see the sample examination regulations supplementing the framework examination regulations at tud.de/bologna/arbeitshilfen).

"[...] Students who have utilized the option according to § #x# paragraph #y# sentence #z# shall be awarded the #degree# jointly by the cooperation partners.

b. Joint certificates (supplement to the corresponding paragraph in § 2 of the examination regulations, see the sample examination regulations supplementing the framework examination regulations at tud.de/bologna/arbeitshilfen).

"[...] For students who have utilized the option according to § #x# paragraph #y# sentence #z#, the certificate is to be issued jointly by TU Dresden and the cooperation partners.

In the case of double degrees, the regulations according to No. 1 can be included in the study documents (if desired). For joint degrees, the regulations according to No. 1 and 2 are to be used. It is possible to forgo a joint certificate (No. 2 b) if the certificates of the participating universities explicitly refer to the circumstances of the joint degree conferral. A modification of the rules regarding credits is not necessary, as cooperation agreements already provide for them (§ 22 para. 1 of the framework examination regulations). Unit 8.4 advises against a joint certificate and diploma supplement, as the anticipated effort would be disproportionate to the result.

Periods of study abroad stipulated by the curriculum require special regulations in the study documents and are therefore to be treated on a case-by-case basis.

### 3.3 Cooperation agreement with partner universities

The cooperation agreement is the key document that sets out the terms of cooperation between the universities and specifies what is binding for both parties. It is important to keep in mind that there may be different or even contradictory legal regulations for similar procedures in the partner countries and at partner universities. For this reason, it is important that both partners agree on a mutual approach and that they record and present this approach in as much detail as possible. It is important that they plan sufficient meetings with their partners in order to clarify organizational issues as well as the content of the curriculum.

The contract for the agreement must be coordinated with the International Office (Unit 8.3) and the Legal Office before the CTIO signs it.

### 3.3.1 Basic elements for drafting the agreement contract of the planned double degree with TU Dresden

- 1) Within the framework of which degree programs/at which level will cooperation take place?
  - a) TUD:
  - b) Partner:
- 2) General:
  - a) Compatibility of both degree programs (general structure, modules with ECTS points, language of modules, duration, academic calendar, content overlaps, leeway, etc.)?
    - i) Language: One goal is to plan student exchanges for English modules in particular, in order to remove language barriers.
  - b) Are the admission requirements and prerequisites similar at both institutions?
  - c) Academic recognition of a study segment (bachelor's degree, fundamental studies)
  - d) Financing, if necessary: scholarships, travel funds, student support staff
    - i) Funding, scholarship funds
- 3) Requirements for a degree program at TUD:
  - a) Language: flexible / English preferred
  - b) Minimum grade, minimum number of ECTS credits, previous knowledge, if applicable
  - c) Sufficient selection of English-language modules?
- 4) Requirements for a degree program at the partner institution:
  - a) Language: flexible / English preferred
  - b) Minimum grade, minimum number of ECTS credits, previous knowledge, if applicable
  - c) Sufficient selection of English-language modules?
- 5) Planned curriculum:
  - a) Schedule of the double degree program
  - b) Regulations for the final thesis (in case of double thesis requirements: consider effort required by supervisors)
  - c) Conversion of grades, ECTS points
  - d) Reference to examination regulations
  - e) Which degrees will be awarded?
  - f) Financial arrangements (tuition fees at partner institution? No tuition fees at both locations)

### 4. TU Dresden's quality assurance of degree programs with international and German partner universities

TU Dresden introduced its own quality management system in 2011, which successfully passed the system accreditation assessment procedure in 2015. An essential component is quality analysis, which is carried out by the Center for Quality Analysis (ZQA) in cooperation with Unit 8.4, and whose results are documented in the form of an evaluation report. As part of the quality analysis process, the status of the implementation of TU Dresden's quality objectives, which are



based on the Saxon Study Accreditation Ordinance (SächsStudAkkVO) of May 29, 2019, is examined. This evaluation report forms the basis for the accreditation decision by the Commission for Quality in Studies and Teaching. All degree programs with international and German cooperation partners are also included in the established internal quality management system.

When analyzing the quality of the cooperation programs, various aspects have to be taken into account. With regard to the type of study program, a distinction can be made between shared programs and joint programs. A distinction must also be made as to whether the cooperation takes place in Germany or internationally. The type of degree can be a joint degree or a double degree. Finally, one must distinguish between cooperation with another institution of higher education and cooperation with a non-university institution. The classification of the cooperation program in this grid determines which quality objectives are to be reviewed and evaluated within the framework of the quality analysis.

Fig. 1: Aspects of cooperation programs and quality objectives

Type of degree program	shared program		joint program			
International or German	international		international		German	
Type of degree	joint degree	double degree	joint degree	double degree	joint degree	degree of the university
Partner	university	university	university	university	university	non-university institution
Quality objectives (QO) to be assessed	QO 9.1 + QO 4.1	QO 9.1 + QO 4.1	QO 9.1 + QO 4.1	QO 9.1 + QO 4.1	QO 9.1	QO 9.1

In general, the evaluation of cooperation programs always includes a review and assessment of **quality objective 4.1<sup>2</sup>** and/or **quality objective 9.1**.

**Quality objective 4.1:** In the degree program, students are encouraged to spend time abroad as part of their studies, for example through partnerships and mobility programs at the university, faculty, and degree-program levels.

**Quality objective 9.1:** Degree programs offered by TU Dresden in cooperation with other universities, companies and other institutions are carried out according to cooperation agreements that regulate the cooperative implementation and quality assurance of the degree programs. Special contacts are available for the students' specific counseling and support needs. Regular discussions take place between the cooperation partners on the improvement and ongoing development of the degree programs.

<sup>2</sup> In total, there are four quality objectives for mobility, which deal with special mobility requirements, advisory services and recognition regulations. QO 4.1 illustrates the students' insights into the international cooperation programs (double degrees).

Quality objective 4.1 examines the institutional structures that support students' study-related periods abroad and how students evaluate the period abroad (as part of a double degree program).<sup>3</sup>

In the course of the review of quality objective 9.1, the cooperation itself is considered. It is concerned with the actual course content and agreements concerning the cooperation.

Within the quality analysis, the following **key questions** are in the foreground for the review and assessment of both quality objectives. The **sources** used to provide information for answering the questions are listed in parentheses:

#### **Quality objective 4.1:**

- Which partnerships and mobility programs are available? (discussion with the program coordinator)
- How transparent is the schedule and structure of coursework in the double degree program? (student survey)
- How easy is it to plan one's course of studies? Are there organizational problems or difficulties in general? (student survey)
- How satisfied are you with the support/supervision during the period spent abroad/double degree program? (student survey)

#### **Quality objective 9.1:**

- Is the cooperation formally reflected in the study documents? (content of the formal assessment by Unit 8.4)
- What form of cooperation does it involve? (document analysis)
- Is there a cooperation agreement and what is stipulated in the cooperation agreement? (document analysis)
- Are there contact persons to provide students with advice and support at the respective participating institutions? (document analysis, survey of teaching staff)
- Is there a regular exchange between teaching staff and what form does this take, especially with regard to the implementation and enhancement of the degree program? (survey of teaching staff)

The evaluation report of the Center for Quality Analysis (ZQA) compares the results of the document analysis as well as student and teaching staff surveys, presents the strengths and weaknesses of the degree programs, and then evaluates the quality objectives.

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<sup>3</sup> Due to the low number of people surveyed, this is only possible in rare cases.

## 5. Funding opportunities

The following funding options will be briefly discussed and presented here. Further up-to-date information on the programs and application deadlines can be found on the websites provided.

### 5.1 DAAD

In the double degree program, the German Academic Exchange Service supports the establishment of joint study programs with double and joint degrees:

<https://www.daad.de/hochschulen/programme-weltweit/studiengaenge/de/23193-integrierte-internationale-studiengaenge-mit-doppelabschluss/>

### 5.2 Erasmus +: Erasmus Mundus joint master's degrees

The Erasmus Mundus joint master's degree program is the successor program to the Erasmus Mundus master's course. These are international master's degree programs offered jointly by at least three European higher education institutions from three European countries, leading to a double, multiple or joint degree and including at least two compulsory mobility windows to be spent in two different European countries. The Erasmus Mundus joint master's degrees are funded by the European Commission and award scholarships to students from all over the world. The scholarships are awarded through European higher education networks that have successfully applied to the EU Commission in Brussels.

Further information can be found here: <https://eu.daad.de/KA1/jointmasterdegrees/de/>

### 5.3 The Franco-German University (FGU)

Integrated degree programs offered by German and French partners are supported by the Franco-German University. Two or more equivalent degrees may be awarded. Current calls for applications can be found at: <https://www.dfh-ufa.org/informationen-fuer/hochschulen/ausschreibungen>

## 6. Overview of existing double degree programs

An overview of double degree programs existing at TU Dresden can be found on the website of the International Office (Unit 8.3) at: [Double degree/Joint degree programs](#).

For the above-mentioned programs, the contracts and program-specific examination and study regulations can be obtained upon request from the International Office (Unit 8.3).

### 6.1 Other universities

Leipzig University, Master's in Advanced Spectroscopy in Chemistry:

o Internal Regulations for Examination and Assessment of the Erasmus Mundus Master Course "Advanced Spectroscopy in Chemistry" (ASC) leading to the degree Master of Science (M. Sc.), a "Chemistry EuroMaster."

Reutlingen University, B.Sc. International Management Double Degree (IMX):

o Selection charter (dated July 11, 2013) and module handbooks,

Reutlingen University, M.Sc. International Management (IPBS):

o Selection charter (dated January 22, 2013), study and examination regulations (dated June 10, 2014) and module handbooks

Heidelberg University, German-French Master's Program in History:

O Examination regulations (dated March 5, 2009), module handbook, study plan

Heidelberg University, International Master's Program in Art History and Museology (IKMK)

o Examination regulations for the master's program (dated March 28, 2007)

University of Tübingen, TübAix, Integrated Degree Program in History:

o Bachelor's and master's agreement, bachelor's and master's curriculum

University of Göttingen, International Nature Conservation (M.Sc./M.I.N.C.):

o Regulations concerning admission requirements (dated February 13, 2014), general examination regulations (dated August 19, 2013), examination and study regulations, module handbook

Bielefeld University, brochure on the German-French Degree Program in Chemistry (Bachelor's):

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