

Outcomes test phase meeting CoRe II-project

20 & 21 January 2010
Nuffic, Kortenaerkade 1 (temporary building), The Hague
Room: 1.05
The Hague, The Netherlands

Present

Tuning coordinator	Robert Wagenaar
Tuning subject area coordinators	Ann Katherine Isaacs (History), Lupo Dona dalle Rosa (Physics) and Mary Gobbi (Nursing)
Test partners Tuning History	Kenan Inan (Karadeniz Technical University), Seija Jalagin (University of Oulu), Jack Thomas (University of Toulouse)
Test partners Tuning Physics	Hay Geurts (Radboud University), Gareth Jones (Imperial College), Laura Tugulea (University of Bucharest)
Test partners Tuning Nursing	Kirsten Bjerg, Birgitte Hindsgaul (VIA University College) and Frederik de Decker (Ghent University Association)
ENIC/NARIC	Lucie de Bruin, Marianne Cox (Nuffic), Katja Durkin, Torjus Abusland (UK NARIC)
Project coordination	Jenneke Lokhoff, Bas Wegewijs (Nuffic)
Nuffic	Eric Beerkens

OBJECTIVES

The overall objective of the second phase of the CoRe 2 project – the ‘test phase’ – is to test the draft version of the Guide that has been developed in the first phase of the project. This testing is carried out by 9 higher education institutions in the fields of history, physics and nursing. The test phase is an important part of the project as it will ensure input of the higher education institutions, who will be the main end users of the Guide. Furthermore the examples of good practice in the Guide are to be provided by the test partners. Therefore the contributions of the testing panel are vital for the draft of the final format.

The specific objectives of the meeting were twofold:

1. to identify and agree on examples of good practice to be included in the Guide, and to improve the instructions in the Guide on how to produce these good examples accordingly; and,
2. to evaluate and revise the user friendliness of the Guide and the information included.

WORKING METHOD & STRUCTURE OF THE MEETING

To reach the objectives of the meeting, the participants were asked to complete the Degree Profile for their higher education programme by using the Guide drafted in phase 1 of the CoRe 2 project. The submitted Degree Profiles were distributed to the test partners before the meeting and all test partners were asked to study them beforehand and get familiar with them. Degree Profiles were received from all 8 attending partners, often for all three cycles (Bachelor, Master and Doctoral). In addition a substantial group of volunteers –unofficial test partners – from history had gone through the same exercise. These Degree Profiles were distributed to the partners as well.

Furthermore, the test partners were explicitly asked to identify beforehand what in more general terms could be improved to make the Guide more user friendly (e.g. in terms of clear language, succinctness and its structure).

The test meeting followed a bottom up approach: first to seek agreement on what is considered good practice, then to identify examples of good practice in the Degree Profiles and finally to agree on how the Guide should be

improved for future users (higher education institutions) to be able to produce this good practice when completing the Degree Profile.

The focus of day 1 was on section C and F of the Degree Profile and how the current descriptions in the Guide could be improved in order for the future users of the Guide to produce these types of good examples. On day 2 a similar exercise was undertaken for the remaining entries of the Degree Profile (A, B, D and E) and their descriptions. At the end of day 2 general improvements of the Guide were tackled.

At the start of the meeting, the NARICs presented a short analysis of the Degree Profiles provided by the test partners, from the point of view of recognition experts. The main conclusion of the analysis was that the template of the Degree Profile seems very effective, but that there is also room for improvement. Furthermore, some points to consider for the meeting were identified.

The meeting consisted of working groups and plenary sessions. The working groups were organised in the three subject areas history, physics and nursing. Each working group included the test partners for the particular subject areas, each group was complemented by the Tuning subject coordinators and the representatives from the NARICs. The findings from the groups were used to feed the plenary discussions and reach consensus about the different topics on the agenda.

OUTCOMES DAY 1

The discussion on the first day focused on section C (Competences) and Annex F (Learning Outcomes) of the Degree Profile, and further chapter 3, which corresponds with section F.

Agreement was reached on the following distinction between a competence and a learning outcome. A **competence** is a property of the student. It describes what the student can do. Competences are very similar to the short descriptions of requirements of staff to be hired that you see listed in a job description. The descriptions of competences -although short- should contain information on the context in which the competence is applied. As such, this may also imply the 'level' of the competence. A **learning outcome** is a (usually much longer) statement in which a measurable outcome of a competence is described, with a clear link to the level of the competence. Learning outcomes are not properties of the student, but a means for the higher education institutions to measure if students have developed their competences to the required level.

Section C

For section C the following improvements were suggested:

- The order of 'generic' and 'specific' competences should be consistent in the template and the instructions, i.e. first generic and then specific.
- For both the generic competences and subject specific competences it was suggested to:
 1. put the competence heading first (e.g. research, communication, interpersonal, teamwork, ethics) followed by a colon (e.g. research); and,
 2. have the short statement under 1 followed by a qualifying/informative statement (e.g. communication: ability to communicate effectively with a range of people from different backgrounds).
- Indicate these are the key 'generic' and 'specific' competences obtained upon program completion.
- Pursue consistency in language: do we use 'key', 'main', 'core', 'principal' or 'essential' competences? It is decided to work with 'key' or 'main' – having the same meaning. A similar decision has to be made with regards to 'general' and 'generic'.
- Guidance should be provided as to the minimum or maximum amount of competences.
- Refer to the standard list from Tuning to list the competences, but only as inspiration: the Tuning standard list should be used flexibly and descriptions should be tailored to the programme.
- The descriptions of the competences should be short, but not too short as to avoid oversimplification.
- It would be helpful to define 'level' and how it is used in the Guide to avoid confusion.
- Differences between competences and learning outcomes are not always clearly distinguished.
- Regarding the instructions it was recommended to:
 - delete the header 'general' (italics) in the Degree Profile;

- include a clear definition of 'competence' and further a statement about what is meant by a generic competence and a subject specific competences;
- change 'including both' into 'should be subdivided into' and replace the sentence 'They are formulated in general terms and are based' with 'for the full list of learning outcomes, see below, section F'. The level of the competences can be incorporated, but this is on a functional level (or later in section F when a complete list of learning outcomes is given);
- delete the first sentence under descriptions. 'These are the main characteristics of the programme. They describe the core competences the students will have obtained at the end of the programme. These core competences should align to the programme learning outcomes outlined in section F. Please note these descriptions should be precise and succinct, ideally they should be approximately 8-15 in total. For regulated or professionally oriented programmes refer to guidance notes'; and,
- provide an explanation of the relation between C and F, and how they correspond with each other.
- It was mentioned that not all subject areas (for example regulated professions) might have a distinction between subject specific and generic. Therefore it was suggested to include a qualifying note to 'where possible distinguish between general/generic and subject specific competences'.
- It was suggested to link the generic descriptions in section C to the Dublin Descriptors.

Section F

For section F the following improvements were suggested:

- Good practice: use the examples in the Guide as inspiration to write the learning outcomes, yet use them flexibly. Individualize descriptions that reflect the reality of a degree.
- Include examples of learning outcome descriptions (see section C).
- A definition of a learning outcome should be provided, and the difference between a competence and a learning outcome should be clearly stated. On the other hand, an explanation of the relation between section C and F – competences and learning outcomes – should be provided.
- It should be indicated that these are the learning outcomes that will have been achieved by each student who has successfully completed the programme.
- F should not be longer an annex and instead included as an entry in the Degree Profile.
- If there are structured tracks or pathways within the programme this has to be clearly indicated in the learning outcomes showing these.
- Rename the section into 'Degree Programme Learning Outcomes'.
- Learning outcomes should not be distinguished between generic and specific (why 10 and 15), but be listed in one list.
- If relevant, this list can be supplemented by learning outcomes that reflect optional pathways within the programme.
- In the instruction the 3 bullets on page 15 should be deleted.

Chapter 3

Chapter 3 was considered not to be useful from a practical point of view. It was suggested that the paragraphs 3.1 till 3.4 should be included in an annex. Here also information could be provided about 'who and what is Europe', including developments such as the Copenhagen process, EQF and the Dublin Descriptors.

Paragraph 3.5 should be included under F, as an instruction to this entry. It was noted that 3.5 needs substantial improvement to be useful for formulating learning outcomes.

OUTCOMES DAY 2

The opinions on the Degree Profile entries resulting from the working groups were brought forward during the plenary and included in the Degree Profile on the spot.

The suggestions incorporated in the new template include the following:

- Include a 'Section 00' which adds more information on the degree:
 - to include the name of the institution;
 - to provide an English translation of the degree;

- to include the country that is awarding the degree;
- to have a reference to the year the program was valid/had been accredited, or the duration of the validity (of accreditation); and,
- to have reference to the 2 European qualification frameworks (EQF/QF EHEA) and the NQF if applicable.
- 'Section A - Purpose', should be no more than 2 sentences and it should be clearly specified what information has to be provided in this section. It should give the 'flavour' of the programme; a general statement of the purpose of the degree.
- The title of 'Section B – Focus of the degree' should be changed into 'Section B - Characteristics'. For all sections it was also advised to leave out the suggestions between parentheses. Other proposals about the section included:
 - To change B.1 Disciplinary orientation (mono, multi, inter) into 'Disciplines'. 'Mono, multi and interdisciplinary' should be left out of the title and indicating reference to the main discipline (s) or subjects/subject areas of the program should be sufficient. Mono, multi and interdisciplinary could be included in the instructions, but only with a clear explanation to avoid confusion;
 - the subject of B.2 should remain 'Focus', but to leave general and/or specialist out of the title as well as out of the instructions. In the instructions the dissertation topic should be left out, as well as 'Full time/Part time' as this refers to individual learning paths;
 - to change Section B.3 Orientation (research/applied) into Section B.3 'Orientation' and to leave out point 6 and 7 from the instructions; and,
 - to include a new subentry (B.4) called 'Distinctive Features', to indicate distinguishing features of a programme (e.g. features that distinguish this programme from other similar programmes), if applicable or to include mention of other disciplines taught like languages, etc.
- For section 'D - Employability & Further Education', it was recommended to include in the instructions that for both clear reference should be made with the specialisation of the programme and the competences achieved (C). Further it was suggested to include the opportunity to indicate the relevant legal framework in D.1 (e.g. for regulated professions).

Before completing the Degree Profile it was suggested to include some general remarks ('requirements' or a tick box list), such as:

- Use the instructions and the examples of good practice provided.
- The purpose of the Degree Profile and that the Degree Profile should be readable in 5 minutes.
- To get the Diploma Supplement before completing the Degree Profile (staff might not be aware about the existence of the Diploma Supplement).

More in general headings should correspond with the titles. Furthermore it was suggested to have a user friendly template in which the 'core instructions' of the Degree Profile are already included in the template (a comparison was made with a government form). It was recommended to include examples from all 3 cycles in the instruction sections.

Suggestions on general improvements to be made for the Guide

The following suggestions were given to improve the user friendliness of the Guide:

- Instructions on what has to be done should be as simple as possible.
- Suggestion to include an introductory text all in one place above the boxes in the instructions.
- The overall goals of the CoRe 2 project should be reflected in the style of the guide. This is currently not for all chapters the case.
- Check English and either choose American English or British English.
- Checklist to be include after completing the Degree Profile, e.g. asking if you were consistent.
- Check whether the definitions used in the instructions are included in the glossary and if they correspond with the ECTS User's Guide and the Tuning definitions.

The following was suggested to be improved in the introduction:

- Introduction needs to be changed and rewritten from the viewpoint of the user who needs to complete the Degree Profile.
- Indicate the Degree Profile is written at programme level and is not individualized.

- Indicate who the users are. There are different modalities to use the Guide.
- Explain how the Degree Profile can be useful.
- Mention that users should be aware that completing the Degree Profile is group work.
- Include a paragraph about the overall expectations on what the work of completing the Degree Profile entails, what is to be done and what the end result should be. For example highlight that the Degree Profile should be readable in 5 minutes, should only be 2 pages long and that formulations should be succinct and transparent.
- Background information about policy initiatives could be provided in an annex.
- Mention and explain the relation between the Degree Profile and the Diploma Supplement. Refer to Diploma Supplement 4.2 (C and F). It was also mentioned the Diploma Supplement could refer to the Degree Profile.
- State the origin and aim of the project in brief. Also include the context and status of the Degree Profile, e.g. adopted by Tuning.

ACTION POINTS

Test partners

The examples from the Degree Profiles to be provided by the test partners will be included in the instructions and further (anonymized) included as annexes in the Guide. Therefore the test partners are asked to:

- Rewrite the Degree Profiles of programmes in all 3 cycles, using the new template for the Degree Profile. The agreed deadline has been set on 1 March. The NARICs of the core working group will have a look and will provide feedback to each test partner, if any.
- Following the feedback the test partners have the opportunity to make adjustments - if applicable- till 1 April.

Core working group

- Template Degree Profile:
 - to provide the test partners with a new template for the Degree Profile following the recommendations given in the above and to send this to the test partners shortly after the meeting.
- The Guide:
 - to rewrite the introduction covering the points agreed upon during the meeting and mentioned in the above; and,
 - to implement the conclusions and recommendations done at the meeting for the template and in the instructions (currently chapter 2) and to include examples of good practice to illustrate the instructions.
- Split up chapter 3:
 - 3.5 moves to section F (which is no longer an annex but an entry to the Degree Profile); and,
 - 3.1-3.4 will become annexes of the Guide.
- To adjust the glossary according to the new content (decide whether it will stay an annex or should be included as a chapter).
- The project coordinator will propose a work division and timeline for the core working group on the work to be done.

Time frame: the test phase will end 1 April. The new version of the Guide which is developed with the input in the second phase will in phase 3 go for consultation to the working group and the ENIC/NARIC network. The final version of the Guide is to be published in autumn 2010.