Tempus SMGR No: 517340 – TEMPUS - 1-2011-1- IT
Documentation for Quality Assurance of Study Programmes (DoQuP)

Training Seminar on
Software for on-line management of identified information and data for QA of SPs in PCs

Conferenza dei Rettori delle Università Italiane (CRUI) – Roma
13-15 November 2013

Impact of the Bologna process on the design of SPs in Italy

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Topics

a) The design of Study Programmes (SPs) according to the Tuning approach

b) The design of SPs according to the ANVUR approach

c) Conclusions

a) The design of SPs according to the Tuning approach

What is Tuning

'**Tuning**' is a university driven initiative, which was originally set up to offer **a concrete approach to implement the European Bologna process at the level of Higher Education Institutions** (HEIs) and subject areas.

Over time Tuning has developed into an **approach to (re-)design, develop, implement and evaluate SPs** for each of the Bologna cycles - bachelor, master and, more recently, doctorate -, which nowadays can be considered valid worldwide, since it has been tested and found fruitful in several continents.

Necessity of a new approach for designing study programmes after Bologna

According to the Tuning approach, **the Bologna process, with the introduction of a three cycle system, makes it necessary to revise all existing SPs which are not based on the concept of cycles and implies a drastic change in the design of SPs**.

In practice **existing programmes have to be re-designed because in a cycle system each cycle should be seen as an entity in itself. In particular, the first two cycles should not only give access to the following cycle but also to the labour market**.

Input-based versus output-based programmes

The 'old' degree programmes were designed on the basis of tradition and the resources already available. They can be considered as '**input-based**' or '**teacher/staff oriented/centred**'.

In such programmes the **emphasis is placed on the individual interests of academic staff** or on the existing organisation of studies.

At present HEIs are undergoing a transformation process. The traditional approach is slowly giving way to an '**output-based**', '**student-oriented/centre**d' **approach**, which takes **the student as the centre of the teaching and learning process**.

The aim of a student-centred programme is to make students as competent as is feasible in a given timeframe for their future role in society.
In these programmes **the focus is no more on what a student has been taught, but on what a student has learned and is able to do**, that is on **competence development** and the achievement of intended **learning outcomes** of the learning process.

Competences and learning outcomes

'Competences' represent a dynamic combination of knowledge, understanding, skills (that is learned capacities, according to the Tuning glossary) ***and abilities*** (acquired or natural capacities).

They are obtained or developed during the process of learning **by the student/learner**.

'Learning outcomes' are statements of what a learner is expected to know, understand and/or be able to demonstrate after completion of a process of learning.
They should align with the programme competences, not necessarily on a one to one basis, but overall.

Desired learning outcomes are formulated by the academic staff, on the basis of input of internal and external stakeholders.

Tuning approach to design, develop, implement and evaluate study programmes

The main steps of the Tuning approach to the design, development, implementation and evaluation of a SP can be summarised as follows.

1. Meeting the basic conditions, articulated in:

1.1 Demonstration of the programme need and identification of the stakeholders' needs

1.2 Availability of the necessary resources

Deciding to institute a degree programme should normally be the ***outcome of a process of analyzing the needs of society*** combined with those of the specific subject area ***as well as the personnel and infrastructural means*** which can be made available to establish the SP.

1.1 Demonstration of the programme need and Identification of the stakeholders' needs

The **social need for the programme must be demonstrated through a broad consultation**. The consultation should not only include the academic community, but also employers, professional bodies and other stakeholders.

The consultation process should also **identify the educational needs of the stakeholders**, in terms of competences required of the future programme graduates.

1.2 Availability of the necessary resources

The availability of **adequate resources** is a pre-condition for delivering a programme. Resources include both academic staff and facilities.

The **teaching staff** in charge of the course units should be ***quantitatively and qualitatively adequate*** to favour the achievement of the intended programme learning outcomes by the students.

The **facilities** (in particular: classrooms, rooms for individual studies, laboratories, libraries) should be ***quantitatively and qualitatively adequate*** to the development of the didactic activities according to what designed and planned and to actuate the established didactic methods.

2. **Definition of the degree profile**, articulated in:

2.1 Identification and definition of the programme competences to be developed

2.2 Definition of the programme learning outcomes to be met.

The degree profile must clearly ***define*** the aims and purposes of the SP, ***describe,*** in terms of competences and learning outcomes, what graduates will know, understand and be able to do by the time they have successfully completed the programme, ***spell out*** what can be expected of the graduates in terms of tasks they are equipped to undertake, their level of expertise and the responsibilities they can assume.

2.1 Identification and definition of the programme competences to be developed

Competences can be distinguished in ***subject-specific*** (that is specific to a field of study) and ***generic*** (common to any degree programme) competences.

2.2 Definition of the programme learning outcomes to be met

Programme learning outcomes should be ***aligned with, and informed by, relevant international and national frameworks*** at both the general educational level and the specific subject level.

3. **Definition of the degree programme**, articulated in:

3.1 Definition of the curriculum

3.2 Definition of the course-unit characteristics (specific learning outcomes, content, approaches to teaching and learning as well as assessment methods)

3.3 Planning of the curriculum development

4. Development of an evaluation system to enhance programme quality, articulated in:

4.1 A monitoring process

4.2 An evaluation process

Programme design and delivery must be ***continually monitored and evaluated*** to find out whether the aims are actually being achieved and whether they continue to be appropriate or should take into account changes and developments in the subject areas and in society.

4.1 Monitoring process

The purpose of the monitoring process is to collect and elaborate information and data on key indicators of the educational process.

Both *forward* ('ex-ante') and *backward* ('ex-post') *monitoring* should be in operation in the monitoring process.

Tuning project has never proposed monitoring plans, but they can be easily derived from the best practices of programme monitoring in the European Higher Education Area.

Forward monitoring

Forward monitoring regards the ***identification of expected developments of the stakeholders needs,*** which should be taken into account when developing and/or improving programmes.

Backward monitoring

The main purpose of backward monitoring is to gather, elaborate and document:

- the ***programme outputs***, through the collection of administrative data (in particular: number and typology of the students enrolled in the first year of course, results of the assessment of the students' learning, students' progression in their studies);
- the ***opinions of students and academic staff on course units and educational process***;
- information and data on the ***graduate placement*** (in particular: graduates' placement and time to placement, effectiveness of the degree in the carried out job, alumni's opinions, employers' opinions).

4.2 Evaluation process

The main aim of the evaluation process is the improvement of the programme quality.

The ***evaluation process*** should be periodic (for instance yearly) and planned.

The evaluation process should be preceded by an ***analysis process***, finalised to the ***identification of the strong and weak points*** of the SP, through at least the comparison of the SP's results with those obtained in the preceding years and the results obtained by other SPs of the same typology, if any, and to the ***identification of the causes of the weak points*** (e.g.: causes of the dropouts, motivations of delays in graduation, etc.).

Then, in correspondence of the weaknesses, it should identify the ***improvement actions*** to be adopted and all the opportunities to correct deficiencies in the design and/or delivery of the curriculum, in order to improve the educational service offered by the programme and its results.

b) The design of SPs according to the ANVUR approach

Today in Italy the main reference for the design of SPs is the document

Self-Assessment, Evaluation and Acreditation of the Italian University System,
(AVA document)

approved and made public by the **National Agency for the Evaluation of the University System and Research** (ANVUR) in July 2012 and implemented by the Ministerial Decree of 27 January 2013 n. 47.

The **AVA system** is an ***integrated system*** where the carrier is the Quality Assurance (QA) at institutional and SP level and where with "**quality assurance**" it is intended ***the set of activities (or processes) for the management of the SP in order to achieve the established educational objectives*** and, therefore, to ensure trust to all stakeholders that the quality requirements set out will be satisfied.

As a matter of fact ANVUR considers ***QA the base of any evaluation and accreditation system***.
The lack of a system of QA or its inadequacy would render ineffective any evaluation system aimed at improving the quality and accrediting the SPs.

But ***the AVA document does not propose a model of QA system and let alone defines guidelines for the design of SPs***: Universities have to be free to define autonomously their QA system and their SPs' design process.

The AVA document defines only the ***documentation (information and data) to be shown in a Annual Unique Form of the SP (SUA-CdS)*** for the purpose of QA, which has to be made available on-line and public and which constitutes the base for every activity of self-assessment, external assessment and accreditation.

However, **the AVA document defines 'indirectly' the activities (or processes) which should be managed in order to assure the SP quality and, hence, the guidelines for the design of SPs**.

These activities can be deduced analysing the documentation required by the SUA-CdS.

Section A – Educational Objectives

Required Documentation	Associated Process
A1 – Consultation with the organizations representative of the labour market at national and international level	A1 – Consultation with the organizations representative of the labour market at national and international level
A2 – Educational objectives	A2 – Definition of the educational objectives
A3 – Admission requirements	A3 – Definition of the admission requirements
A4 – Programme learning outcomes	A4 – Definition of the programme learning outcomes
A5 – Graduation exam	A5 – Definition of the characteristics of the graduation exam

Section B – Student's experience

Required Documentation	Associated Process
B1 – Eduational process and learning assessment	B1 – Design of the eduational process and definition of the methods and criteria of learning assessment
B2 - Calendar of educational activities and exams	B2 – Planning of the educational process

Required Documentation	Associated Process
B3 – Lecturers	B3 – Identification and put at disposal of lecturers
B4 - Facilities	B4 – Idenification and put at disposal of facilities
B5 – Support services	B5 – Organization and management of the support services
B6 – Students' opinion	B6 – Montoring of the students' opinion
B7 – Graduates' opinion	B7 – Monitoring of the graduates' opinion

Section C – Education Results

Required Documentation	Associated Process
C1 – Data on entrance students and students' progression in their studies	C1 – Monitoring of entrance students and students' progression in their studies
C2 – Graduates' placement	C2 – Monitoring of graduates' placement
C3 – Employers' opinion	C3 – Monitoring of employers' opinion on graduartes' education

Section D – SP and QA Organization

Required Documentation	Associated Process
D1 – Organizational structure and responsibilities at University level	D1 – Definition of the organizational structure at University level
D2 - Organizational structure and responsibilities at SP level	D2 - Definition of the organizational structure at SP level
D3 - Planning of activities and initiatives for QA	D3 - Planning of the activities and initiatives for the QA
D4 – Re-examination	D4 – Re-examination

c) Conclusions

Correspondance
Tuning approach - ANVUR approach

Tuning approach	ANVUR approach
1.1 Demonstration of the programme need and identification of the stakeholders' needs	A1 – Consultation with the organizations representative of the labour market at national
1.2 Availability of the necessary resources	B3 – Identification and put at disposal of lecturers B4 – Idenification and put at disposal of facilities B5 – Organization and management of the support services

Tuning approach	ANVUR approach
2.1 Identification and definition of the programme competences to be developed	A2 – Definition of the educational objectives
2.2 Definition of the programme learning outcomes to be met	A4 – Definition of the programme learning outcomes

Tuning approach	ANVUR approach
3.1 Definition of the *curriculum*	A5 – Definition of the characteristics of the graduation exam B1 – Design of the educational process
3.2 Definition of the course-unit characteristics	B1 – Design of the educational process and definition of the assessment methods
3.3 Planning of the curriculum development	B2 – Planning of the educational process

Tuning approach	ANVUR approach
4.1 Monitoring process	B6 – Montoring of the students' opinion B7 – Monitoring of the graduates' opinion C1 – Monitoring of entrance students and students' progression in their studies C2 – Monitoring of graduates' placement C3 – Monitoring of employers' opinion on graduartes' education
4.2 Evaluation process	D4 – Re-examination

It can be said that the ANVUR approach to SPs' design 'suggested' by the AVA document is consistent with the Tuning approach and consequently in-line with the requirements of the Bologna process as for the SPs' design.

Thanks for your attention