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EURO-INF

FRAMEWORK STANDARDS

AND

ACCREDITATION CRITERIA

FOR

INFORMATICS PROGRAMMES

01. AUGUST 2008

Euro-Inf -
European Accreditation of Informatics Degree Programmes

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preamble	A
1. Programme Outcomes for Accreditation	1
1.1. Learning Outcomes for First Cycle Degree (FCD) Programmes	3
1.2. Learning Outcomes for Second Cycle Degree (SCD) Programmes	5
2. Guidelines for Programme Assessment and Programme Accreditation	6
2.1. Guidelines for the Criteria and Requirements of Programme Assessment	6
2.2. Guidelines for the Evaluation of Individual Requirements	11
2.3. Guidelines for the Criteria of Programme Accreditation.....	11
3. Procedures for Programme Assessment and Programme Accreditation	12
3.1. Application by a Higher Education Institution (HEI)	12
3.2. Guidelines for the Procedure of Programme Assessment.....	12
3.3. Guidelines for the Procedure of Programme Assessment.....	13
4. Recommended Template for Publication of Results	14
5. Appeal Mechanism	15
ANNEX	I

Preamble

These Standards and Criteria are intended to provide a means for reviewing the quality of higher education informatics* qualifications in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), in a way that encourages the dissemination of good practice and a culture of continuous improvement of informatics programmes. They have been developed within the Euro-Inf Project, the principal aim of which is to develop a framework for the accreditation of informatics degree programmes in the EHEA. Given the great diversity of informatics education across Europe, the attempt to create framework standards comprising all areas of the informatics discipline appears ambitious. The Euro-Inf Framework is thus intended as a broad common denominator, or overarching reference point, for the variety of informatics programmes. In order to allow for possible inclusion of existing informatics specialisations within European Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), the framework must be formulated in rather general terms. The Standards and Criteria contained in this document represent a quality threshold. All graduates of programmes assessed against the Euro-Inf Standards are expected to achieve the programme learning outcomes stated therein.

Principal aim

1. The objective of the Lisbon strategy to create a “knowledge-based society”, and thus to enhance competitiveness and employability throughout Europe requires reform of higher education systems within Europe. In this context, the Bologna Process aims at establishing a European Higher Education Area by 2010. The European Commission is supporting projects aiming to contribute to this reform process. As outlined by the European Ministers of Education in Berlin in September 2003, quality of higher education is “at the heart of the setting up of a European Higher Education Area”. Informatics is certainly to be ranked as a strategically important discipline given the new global competitive challenge Europe faces. It is thus particularly important in the informatics area to develop quality standards for Higher Education programmes and to create and disseminate mechanisms to encourage improvement of quality of education.
2. Accreditation of an informatics degree programme is the primary result of a process used to ensure the suitability of that programme as providing the education base for the entry route to professional practice. It involves a periodic assessment against accepted standards of informatics higher education. Independent, third-party Accreditation is essentially based on a peer review process, undertaken by appropriately trained and independent teams comprising peers from both academia and informatics practice, in

Background

Accreditation

* Where *Informatics* is indicated, *Computing* is also understood.

accordance with agreed principles. It is important that Accreditation processes go beyond judgement on the achievement of a minimum standard, and effectively promote the idea of continuous improvement of the quality of higher education programmes.

3. The Standards for Accreditation can be used in both the design and the evaluation of programmes in all specialisations of informatics. They are expressed as broad generic programme learning outcomes that describe in general terms the capabilities required of graduates from accredited *First Cycle* and *Second Cycle* informatics programmes, as defined in the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area (cf. § 7 of this section). Consequently, they can be interpreted and elaborated by users to reflect the specific demands of different cycles and specialisations. *Standards*

4. Although the Framework is expressed in terms of accrediting degree programmes, it can also be used in relation to recognition of agencies that accredit (or intend to accredit) informatics programmes, in assessing the consistency of their rules and standards with the requirements of the Framework ('meta-accreditation'); alternatively, it can be used as a guideline for the design and development of Standards and Procedures for new Accreditation agencies. The Standards and Criteria are intended to be widely applicable and inclusive, in order to recognise the diversity of degree programmes around Europe that provide the education necessary for a graduate to enter work as an ICT (informatics) professional. *Application fields*

5. The Framework Standards describe the programme (learning) outcomes of an accredited higher education programme but allow for considerable variation in the emphasis of individual programmes. The development of new programmes of study or of new and different ways of delivering the curriculum is to be encouraged. HEIs are also encouraged to provide incentives for excellence in programme development and refinement but it is left to the responsibility of the HEI as to how these incentives are provided. The standards and criteria do not address conditions of access to programmes: these are handled by HEIs, in accordance with national regulations and/or requirements including new and innovative programmes. *HEI
Autonomy*

6. Throughout the following statements of Standards and Procedures, the term "informatics graduate" is used to describe someone who successfully completes an accredited programme in informatics. It is for the appropriate authority in each country to decide if a qualification, accredited or not, is sufficient for professional practice in ICT (the field of informatics) in that country, or if further *Professional
recognition*

education, training or industrial experience are necessary. The Euro-Inf accreditation label will assist such decisions, and particularly those that involve transnational recognition.

7. The development of the programme learning outcomes has been informed by the report 'A Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area' agreed by the Ministerial Conference in Bergen in May 2005, and by the Dublin Descriptors referred to therein. It is also assumed that all programmes to be accredited fulfil the criteria set out in the ENQA '[Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area](#)' and also agreed by the Bergen Conference. Furthermore, it has been informed by the [European Qualifications Framework](#) for lifelong learning proposed by the European Commission for a Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council. *Relevant official documents*
8. Further explanations on background and objectives of the Euro-Inf Project can be found in the attached **Annex**. It also contains a glossary where terms used in this document are explained and clarified. *Annex*

1. Programme Outcomes for Accreditation

The programme outcomes can be described as quality standards for competences, skills and knowledge graduates of an accredited course would be expected to have achieved as the education base for practising their profession or for post-graduate studies. It is important that the programme outcomes vary in extent and intensity in accordance with the differing objectives of First and Second Cycle degree (FCD and SCD) programmes. They have been ranged in the following four categories:

- Underlying Conceptual Basis for Informatics
- Analysis, Design and Implementation
- Technological, Methodological and Transferable Skills
- Other Professional Skills

For each of the mentioned categories expected programme learning outcomes for informatics programmes have been formulated.

The first category “Underlying Conceptual Basis for Informatics” identifies capabilities that are essential to satisfying the other learning outcomes. Furthermore, it provides help for defining which knowledge and understanding graduates should demonstrate of their informatics specialisation as well as of the wider context of informatics. Subsuming the aspects “Analysis, Design and Implementation” in a single category appears worthwhile because they describe the basic steps of a work cycle. The category “Technological, Methodological and Transferable Competences” refers to the expected ability of a graduate to work to combine and abstract his/her technical skills to solve problems involving aspects of a wider, technological context. Thus, he/she is able to use appropriate methods and material to achieve an industrial objective. Social or soft competences, listed under the category “Other Professional Skills” are crucial to communicate information, ideas, problems and solutions. Besides the so-called soft skills, the category refers to project management skills and the knowledge of disciplines and those ancillary principles that are relevant to the working environment of the graduates' specialisation.

The same arrangement of categories was maintained for the programme learning outcomes of Second Cycle Degree (SCD) programmes. They apply in addition to the competences described for graduates of FCD programmes. Although all four outcome categories are used to describe expected outcomes of both FC and SC programmes, there are important differences in the requirements at the two levels. These differences in the levels of First and Second Cycle accredited informatics programmes should inform the interpretation of the programme learning outcomes by HEIs and by auditing teams. For instance, whereas First Cycle graduates should be able to formalise real live problems where informatics are part of the solution, Second Cycle graduates are, in addition, expected to have demonstrated their ability to specify and complete informatics tasks that are complex, incompletely defined or unfamiliar.



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No restriction is implied or intended by the Framework in the design of programmes to meet the specified programme learning outcomes. For example, the requirements of more than one learning outcome could be satisfied within a single module or unit such as project work. Similarly, it is possible that some programmes are designed such that the requirements of the Other Professional Skills category are taught and assessed entirely within modules or units designed to satisfy the requirements of other learning outcomes, whereas in other programmes the Other Professional Skills requirements are taught and assessed in modules or units designed specifically for this purpose.

1.1. Learning Outcomes for First Cycle Degree (FCD) Programmes

Underlying Conceptual Basis for Informatics – First Cycle Degree

Graduates having completed a First Cycle degree should have demonstrated the following capabilities:

- knowledge and understanding of the key aspects and concepts of their informatics discipline¹, including some at the forefront of that discipline
- an awareness of the wider spectrum of informatics disciplines

Analysis, Design and Implementation – First Cycle Degree

Graduates having completed a First Cycle degree should have demonstrated the following capabilities:

- insight into possible application fields of informatics
- ability to become familiar with new informatics applications
- appreciation of the need for deep domain knowledge in certain application areas; appreciation of the extent of this in at least one situation
- formalisation and specification of real-world problems whose solution involves the use of informatics
- understanding the complexity of informatics problems and the feasibility of their solution
- knowledge of appropriate solution patterns
- ability to select and use relevant analytic and modelling methods
- ability to describe a solution at an abstract level
- ability to apply their knowledge and understanding to the design of hardware and/or software which meets specified requirements
- knowledge of all phases of the software life cycle for building new, and maintaining and commissioning existing, software systems
- selection and usage of appropriate process models and programming environments for projects involving traditional applications as well as emerging application areas
- modelling and design of human-computer interaction
- creation and thorough testing of software systems
- familiarity with existing software and application systems and use of their elements

¹ As included in the standards that served as references to identify the educational objectives of the programme.

Technological, Methodological and Transferable Skills – First Cycle Degree

Graduates having completed a First Cycle degree should have demonstrated the following capabilities:

- combine theory and practice to complete informatics tasks
- the ability to undertake literature searches, and to use data bases and other sources of information
- the ability to design and conduct appropriate experiments, to interpret data and draw conclusions
- awareness of relevant state-of-the-art technologies and their application
- recognition of the need for, and engagement in life-long learning

Other Professional Skills – First Cycle Degree

Graduates having completed a First Cycle degree should have demonstrated the following capabilities:

- ability to complete tasks from different application areas while taking into account the existing technical, economical and social context
- consideration of the economic, social, ethical and legal conditions expected in informatics practice
- awareness of project management and business practices, such as risk and change management, and understanding of their limitations
- ability to function effectively as an individual and as a member of a team
- ability to organise their own work independently
- ability to formulate an acceptable problem solution using informatics in a cost-effective and time-efficient way
- basic knowledge in estimating and measuring expense and productivity
- ability to communicate effectively with colleagues, (potential) users and the general public about substantive issues and problems related to their chosen specialisation; communication competence to present ideas and suggested solutions convincingly in written and verbal form

1.2. Learning Outcomes for Second Cycle Degree (SCD) Programmes

Underlying Conceptual Basis for Informatics – Second Cycle

Graduates having completed a Second Cycle degree should have demonstrated the following capabilities:

- profound knowledge and understanding of the principles of informatics
- either a deepened knowledge of a chosen specialisation or broadened knowledge of informatics in general
- critical awareness of the forefront of their specialisation

Analysis, Design and Implementation – Second Cycle

Graduates having completed a Second Cycle degree should have demonstrated the following capabilities:

- specification and completion of informatics tasks that are complex, incompletely defined or unfamiliar
- formulation and solution of problems also in new and emerging areas of their discipline
- application of the state of the art or innovative methods in problem solving, possibly involving use of other disciplines
- ability to think creatively to develop new and original approaches and methods

Technological, Methodological and Transferable Skills – Second Cycle

Graduates having completed a Second Cycle degree should have demonstrated the following capabilities:

- integration of knowledge from different disciplines, and handling complexity
- comprehensive understanding of applicable techniques and methods for a particular specialisation, and of their limits
- awareness of the limits of today's knowledge and the practical application of the state-of-the-art technology
- knowledge and understanding of informatics to create information models, complex systems and processes
- ability to contribute to the further development of informatics

Other Professional Competences – Second Cycle

Graduates having completed a Second Cycle degree should have demonstrated the following capabilities:

- independent work in their professional field
- managerial abilities and effective functioning as leader of a team that may be composed of different disciplines and levels
- effective work and communication also in international contexts
- systematic approach to risk management

2. Guidelines for Programme Assessment and Programme Accreditation¹

2.1. Guidelines for the Criteria and Requirements of Programme Assessment

Each informatics programme for which a Higher Education Institution seeks accreditation or reaccreditation against Euro-Inf standards must be consistent with legal and national requirements and have in place:

- programme educational objectives consistent with the mission of the Higher Education Institution, the priorities of the HEI Department and the needs of relevant stakeholders (such as students, relevant employers, informatics associations or societies, etc.) as well as programme learning outcomes consistent with the programme educational objectives and the specified programme learning outcomes for accreditation (cf. Sections 1.1 and 1.2)
- a curriculum and related processes which ensure achievement of the learning outcomes
- academic and support staff, facilities, financial resources and any cooperation agreements with industry, research institutions and/or other Higher Education Institutions necessary to deliver the learning outcomes
- appropriate forms of assessment which can validly attest to the achievement by graduating students of the programme learning outcomes
- a management system able to ensure the systematic achievement of the learning outcomes and the continual improvement of the programme.

Correspondingly, the guidelines for a programme assessment submitted for accreditation must at least specify the following items:

- a) Relevant Information on the HEI Offering the Programme
- b) The Programme Needs, Objectives and Learning Outcomes
- c) Relevant and Effective Educational Processes
- d) Appropriate Resources and Partnerships
- e) Adequate Assessment of the Educational Process and
- f) An Effective Management System.

The detailed criteria to be assessed within this framework and the associated “requirements” listed in the following Table in the form of questions, valid for both FCD and SCD programmes, should be addressed when assessing an informatics programme for accreditation.

¹ In general, assessment procedures should be in line with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area, The European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), Helsinki, 2005.

URL: www.bologna-bergen2005.no/Docs/00-Main_doc/050221_ENQA_report.pdf (2007-08-10).

Guidelines for Assessment	Criteria to be Assessed	Requirements	What the Self-Assessment Report (cf. Section 3.1) Should Give Evidence of and the Auditing Team Should Check
1. Needs, Objectives and Outcomes	1.1 Needs of the Stakeholders	Have the needs of relevant stakeholders (such as students, potential employers, informatics societies, etc.) been explicitly identified? Do the graduates have clear labour market prospects?	Modes and periods of relationships with the stakeholders. Needs identified for each of the identified stakeholders. Placement of graduates on the labour market.
	1.2 Educational Objectives	Are the programme educational objectives consistent with the mission of the Higher Education Institution (HEI) and priorities of the HEI Department? Have relevant stakeholders been involved in formulating the objectives (such as students, employers, informatics societies, etc.)? Are the programme educational objectives accessible to the relevant stakeholders? Are the programme educational objectives feasible, capable of implementation and valid? Are the programme educational objectives oriented towards currently foreseeable specialist developments? Which other (national, regional) standards have served as references to identify the educational objectives of the subject of study?	Programme educational objectives vs. mission of the HEI, priorities of the HEI Department and needs of the stakeholders. Transparency and publicity of the programme educational objectives. Existing standards that can be drawn on when identifying the fundamental principles underlying the subject of study (e.g. specifications issued by German Accreditation Agency Specialised in Accrediting Degree Programs in Engineering, Informatics, the Natural Sciences and Mathematics; British Computer Society; Gesellschaft für Informatik; Association for Computing Machinery, GRIN (Italian Association of Informatics Professors) etc.).
	1.3 Programme Outcomes	Do the programme outcomes (knowledge, skills, competences) acquired by the graduates cover the programme outcomes specified in the Euro-Inf Standards for accreditation? (cf. Section 1)	Analysis of how programme outcomes acquired by the graduates correspond to the specified Euro-Inf programme learning outcomes for accreditation (cf. Section 1).
		Are the programme learning outcomes (knowledge, skills, and competences) acquired by the graduates consistent with the programme educational objectives?	Analysis of how far programme learning outcomes acquired by the graduates correspond to the programme educational objectives formulated by the HEI in the self-assessment report.
2. Educational Process	2.1 Planning	Is the curriculum adequate to enable the achievement of the defined programme educational objectives? Does the curriculum cover an educational level that corresponds to the targeted degree? Does the curriculum provide incentives for excellence? Do teaching staff, students and stakeholders such as potential employers consider the curriculum to be well-designed with respect to the targeted objectives?	Curriculum (syllabus, ECTS credits, credits for course work and personal study), its transparency and publicity. Definition/description of module' characteristics (credits, contents, specific learning outcomes, assessment methods of individual modules), their transparency and publicity. Integration of professional practice (external practical experience, laboratories, projects, etc.). Final examination, thesis, project, etc. Correspondence of curriculum and modules' characteristics to the programme objectives. The teaching methods and didactic means

Guidelines for Assessment	Criteria to be Assessed	Requirements	What the Self-Assessment Report (cf. Section 3.1) Should Give Evidence of and the Auditing Team Should Check
		<p>Does the curriculum encompass a sound didactic concept taking into account student needs such as challenge, stimulation, and excitement? Is the content of the curriculum oriented towards expected specialist developments and existing standards for the subject?</p> <p>Does the HEI support students' mobility?</p>	<p>used to support the attainment of the objectives.</p> <p>Planning of the delivery.</p> <p>Teaching methods and techniques (fulltime, part time, parallel to or integrated in professional work, use of multimedia or telematics devices, etc.).</p> <p>Measures to promote excellence.</p> <p>Measures to take into account currently foreseeable specialist developments.</p> <p>Measures to promote the mobility of students on the programme.</p>
	2.2 Delivery	Is teaching delivered according to planning?	<p>Compliance of the delivery with the plans.</p> <p>Analysis of students' evaluation of taught modules.</p> <p>Analysis of students' and tutors' evaluation of external practical experiences.</p> <p>Analysis of students' mobility.</p>
		Are counselling and support-workload provided for the students adequate to enable achievement of the modules' specific learning outcomes?	Number of staff and their workload for counselling and support to the students.
	2.3 Learning Assessment	Have examinations, projects and other assessment methods been designed to evaluate the extent to which students can demonstrate achievement of the learning outcomes of individual modules and programme outcomes throughout the programme and at its conclusion?	<p>Examination papers and coursework (exam. papers and samples of assessed coursework, continuous assessments, project reports, to be presented during the visit).</p> <p>Written examinations / final theses (to be presented during the visit)</p> <p>Transparency and publicity of the standards and rules concerning the assessment of student performance.</p>
3. Resources and Partnerships	3.1 Academic and Support Staff	<p>Is the academic staff adequate to enable accomplishment of the programme outcomes? Is the academic staff deployed effectively in order to deliver an excellent curriculum?</p> <p>Does the HEI provide support for students learning activities at home (e.g. e-tutorials, accessibility of academic staff via email)?</p>	<p>Composition, competence and qualification of the teaching staff, and explanation of their 'adequacy'.</p> <p>Absolute and relative number of teaching staff (ratio student/full time teaching staff).</p> <p>Research (publications, participation in research projects, participation in conferences, etc.) and/or professional activities and consulting work of the teaching staff.</p>
		Is the technical and administrative support staff adequate to enable achievement of the programme outcomes?	Number, composition, competence and qualification of the technical-administrative support staff.
	3.2 Learning environment	<p>Are the lecture facilities adequate to enable the programme outcomes to be accomplished?</p> <p>Do they create a positive learning environment?</p> <p>Are research and development activities meaningfully integrated into the programme?</p>	Lecture facilities and associated equipment available to students and explanation of their 'adequacy'.

Guidelines for Assessment	Criteria to be Assessed	Requirements	What the Self-Assessment Report (cf. Section 3.1) Should Give Evidence of and the Auditing Team Should Check
		Are the computing facilities and course materials adequate to enable the programme outcomes to be accomplished?	Computing facilities available to students (e-learning tools, desktops/laptops, video projectors etc.).
		Are any laboratories, workshops and associated equipment needed for the programme adequate to enable the programme outcomes to be accomplished?	Laboratories, workshops and associated equipment available to students.
		Are the libraries and associated equipment and services adequate to enable programme outcomes to be accomplished? Do the libraries and associated equipment create a positive learning environment? Do conditions of, and access to, learning facilities, equipment and services support an effective learning process?	Libraries and associated equipment and services available to students. Academic guidance measures for prospective and existing students. Explanation of their adequacy.
	3.3 Financial Resources	Are the available financial resources adequate to enable the programme outcomes to be accomplished? Are available financial resources used effectively in creating a positive learning environment?	Budget for teaching and support staff. Budget for running and upgrading facilities. Budget for training. Explanation of adequacy in relation to numbers on programme.
4. Assessment of Educational Process	4.1 Students	Do the students seeking enrolment in the programme have the right knowledge and attitudes to enable achievement of the programme outcomes in the expected time?	Local / regional / national / international industrial partnerships and cooperation agreements. Local / regional / national / international partnerships and cooperation agreements with research institutions. Local / regional / national / international cooperation agreements, programmes or measures with other Higher Education Institutions.
		Do the results related to the students' study progress attest to the achievement of the programme learning outcomes in the expected time?	Entrance requirements. Admission requirements (<i>only for programmes with admission quota arrangements</i>). Students' study progress. Learning levels achieved. Success rates / retention rates, drop out rates and time taken to complete the programme. Number of students commencing each degree programme.
	4.2 Graduates	Do graduates enter an occupation corresponding to their qualification?	Number of graduates (preliminary / intermediate / final examinations passed). Time taken to enter the workforce. Match between employment and education received.

Guidelines for Assessment	Criteria to be Assessed	Requirements	What the Self-Assessment Report (cf. Section 3.1) Should Give Evidence of and the Auditing Team Should Check
		Do stakeholders (graduates, employers, etc.) confirm the achievement of the programme's educational objectives?	Graduates' opinions on the education received. Opinion of employers on the graduates' education.
5. Management System	5.1 Organisation and Decision-making Processes	Are the HEI's and programme's organisation and decision-making processes adequate for enabling the programme outcomes to be accomplished?	Documentation on HEI's and programme's organisational structures and decision-making processes (statutes, organisational charts, management of organisational processes, etc.). Positions of responsibility for the various actions to direct and control the educational process, their relationships of link and dependence. Existence and use of effective co-ordination mechanisms of decision-making processes, both horizontal and vertical. Existence and use of reliable information sources for decision-making. Some kind of summative statement explaining compliance.
	5.2 Quality Assurance System	Are the HEI's and programme's Quality Assurance Systems effective in enabling the achievement of the programme outcomes? Is its quality assurance approach reviewed regularly? Is this concept actually being implemented and used to make improvements? Is it capable of identifying deviations from the programme educational objectives? Does it enable the revision of the educational objectives? Is information on graduate placements, where applicable, systematically collected and evaluated?	HEI's and programme's policy and procedures for quality assurance. Evaluation during educational process (e.g. student surveys). Evaluation of the success of the degree programme (e.g. Data and statistics from graduate surveys, student surveys, studies on graduate employment).
		Are the delivery process', students' and graduates' results analysed and used to promote continual improvement of the programme?	Existence of a regulated and systematic process for continual programme review, development and improvement based on the analysis of the delivery processes, students' and graduates' results. Results of improvement actions.
		Are needs, objectives and outcomes, educational process, resources and partnerships, management system periodically re-examined?	Existence of a regulated, systematic and periodic process for re-examining needs objectives and outcomes, educational process, resources and partnerships, management system. Results of re-examination activity.

2.2. Guidelines for the Evaluation of Individual Requirements

When assessing the achievement of individual requirements for the programme review, a scale with at least the following three categories should be used:

- a. Acceptable without reservation
- b. Acceptable with adjustment requirements
- c. Unacceptable.

The outcome “acceptable” should be awarded to requirements, which have been fully met, even if improvements are still possible.

The outcome “acceptable with adjustment requirements” should be awarded to requirements, which have not been fully met, but are judged to be achievable within a reasonable period of time (as a rule no longer than half the regular full period of accreditation).

The outcome “unacceptable” should be awarded to requirements, which have not been met or fully met, and are judged not to be achievable within a reasonable period of time.

2.3. Guidelines for the Criteria of Programme Accreditation

An informatics programme is accredited if it fulfils the requirements specified under Section 2.1.

To record the assessment outcome concerning the overall achievement of the requirements, a scale with at least the following three points should be used:

- a. Accredited without reservation
- b. Accredited with adjustment requirements
- c. Not accredited.

Accreditation without reservation, with possible specification of recommendations for the improvement of the programme, should be awarded to programmes for which all requirements are judged to be “acceptable”. In this case, accreditation should be awarded for the full period of accreditation (which should not exceed six years).

Accreditation with adjustment requirements, with specification of adjustments and the time in which these must be carried out, should be awarded if one or more requirements are judged to be “acceptable with adjustment requirements”. If a programme is rated as “accredited with adjustment requirements”, accreditation must be awarded for a shorter period of time than the full period of accreditation, after which compliance with the adjustment requirements is verified.

If any of the above conditions are not satisfied, the accrediting panel can recommend that accreditation be withheld.

3. Procedures for Programme Assessment and Programme Accreditation

This section lists the steps the programme assessment (based on self-assessment followed by external review) and programme assessment procedures should follow.⁴ Individual accreditation agencies may add further requirements to respond to nationally and culturally distinctive features of Higher Education in informatics and to ensure compliance with national legislation.

3.1. Application by a Higher Education Institution (HEI)

The detailed self-assessment report and documentation is submitted before the visit of the assessing team (sufficient time should be allowed for review of the report).

The table in Section 2.1 may serve as guideline for the HEI in producing (and for members of the auditing team in reviewing) the self-assessment report and documentation. In any case, the self-assessment report should provide adequate information against all the questions listed in the table in Section 2.1, taking into account at least all the items listed in the last column of the table.

3.2. Guidelines for the Procedure of Programme Assessment

3.2.1. *Composition of Auditing Team*

The auditing team should consist of at least three persons, preferably more, representing a balance of relevant experience and expertise. At least two members of the auditing team should be academics, at least one a practitioner with a SCD or equivalent in informatics. All members of the auditing team should be adequately trained in the conduct of the accreditation process. In this regard accreditation institutions should provide (or ensure provision of) adequate training.

To facilitate the dissemination of good practice in assessment, the accreditation agency should offer the option to include external observers from outside the respective economic region.

Each member of the auditing team must provide a statement indicating that no conflict of interest exists between the HEI Department at which one or more programmes are being accredited and the panel members. This statement should be received prior to any documentation being distributed.

3.2.2. *Duration of the Auditing Visit*

The assessment process should last at least two days, including any preliminary meetings of the auditing team to assess the documentation and the visit to the HEI.

3.2.3. *Structure of the Auditing Visit*

The visit should include:

- a preliminary meeting of the auditing team prior to the visit to identify what information is to be obtained during the visit

⁴ In line with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area; *ibid.*
URL: www.bologna-bergen2005.no/Docs/00-Main_doc/050221_ENQA_report.pdf (2007-08-10).

- a meeting with head of department / university
- a meeting with academic staff members
- a meeting with support staff members
- a meeting with a representative group of students
- a meeting with former students
- a meeting with relevant employers / industry / professional informatics organisations representatives
- a visit of relevant facilities (libraries, laboratories, etc.)
- a review of project work, final papers and other assessed work (with regards to the standard and modes of assessment as well as to the learning achievements of the students)
- feedback by the auditing team at the end of the visit.

3.3. Guidelines for the Procedure of Programme Assessment

3.3.1. *Verification and Validation of the Report by the Accreditation Agency/Commission*

The auditing team prepares, and agrees on an assessment report. The assessment report is then submitted to the HEI to check for factual errors and (should the HEI desire) submit a statement on the report. The statement of the HEI is transmitted to the members of the auditing team for review of the assessment report and formulation of recommendation concerning the accreditation decision.

3.3.2. *Decision on Accreditation*

The final decision on accreditation should be taken by a designated board of the accreditation Agency. The accreditation decision must clearly define the period of validity (the duration of which should not exceed a maximum of six years) and whether it refers to year of entry or year of graduation. After the limited validity of the accreditation has expired, the programme must be submitted to re-accreditation.

The accreditation decision is then communicated to the HEI.

3.3.3. *Publication*

The list of accredited programmes must be made available to the public by each accreditation institution. The following section (Section 4) presents a recommended template for the publication; it will have to be adapted to national legislation.

4. Recommended Template for Publication of Results

Higher Education Institution (name in original language and in English)	
Country	
State/Province (where applicable)	
Name of the Programme (name in original language and in English)	
Degree Awarded	
Qualification Level (First Cycle / Second Cycle)	
Programme Objectives; Profile (where applicable)	
Programme Duration (Semesters; in case of “terms” of different length, indicate them and the equivalent in semesters)	Semesters
Total Number of ECTS Credits Awarded	ECTS cp
Curriculum Analysis (% and credits): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ informatics fundamentals ◦ advanced engineering subjects (including final thesis) ◦ mathematics / natural sciences fundamentals ◦ interdisciplinary contents 	
Brief Description of the Programme	
Examples of Very Good Practice (where applicable)	
Accredited without / with Adjustment Requirements	
Adjustment Requirements (where applicable)	
Accredited by (agency, country)	
Accredited (from ... to ...)	



This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.



5. Appeal Mechanism

Agencies or other national competent authorities that make accreditation decisions on the basis of the Euro-Inf Standards and Criteria should have an appeals procedure. The nature and form of the appeals procedure should be determined in the light of the constitution of each agency.

It should be evident from the documentation to what extent the appeals system is based on a hearing process through which the agency can provide those under evaluation a means to comment on and question the outcomes of the evaluation. Basically, the agency should provide evidence that the appeals system provides for those under evaluation an opportunity to express opinions about evaluation outcomes.



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ANNEX

COMMENTARY

ON THE

EURO-INF

FRAMEWORK STANDARDS AND

ACCREDITATION CRITERIA

FOR

INFORMATICS PROGRAMMES

01. August 2008

I. Objectives of the Euro-Inf Project

Euro-Inf aims to create a framework for setting up a European system of Standards for assessing informatics education at the First Cycle and Second Cycle level (as defined within the Bologna process).

Based on the establishment and approval of this set of standards, the main objectives of the Euro-Inf Project are:

- to provide an appropriate “European Quality Label” for accredited educational programmes in informatics
- to provide a basis for comparing educational qualifications in informatics in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA)
- to facilitate mutual transnational recognition by programme validation and certification
- to facilitate recognition of accredited degrees in informatics higher education in accordance with the EU Directives and other agreements
- thus, together with other field-specific standards and criteria, to contribute to the harmonisation of the European Higher Education Area
- to support the mobility of informatics graduates
- to contribute to international transparency - as one of the objectives of the Bologna Declaration
- to support improvements to the quality of informatics programmes in general

II. Scope and Application of the Euro-Inf Framework Standards

The Euro-Inf Framework Standards are informed in particular by four documents at European level, which are concerned with reforming the European higher education systems. These are:

- The ‘Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area’, agreed by the Bergen Conference in May 2005
- The Dublin Descriptors referred to in the above Framework for Qualifications
- The ENQA ‘Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area’, agreed by the Bergen Conference as ‘European Quality Assurance Standards’

- European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning proposed by the European Commission for a Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council, COM(2006) 479 final.

http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/educ/eqf/com_2006_0479_en.pdf (2007-04-27)

While pursuing a Europe-wide approach, the Euro-Inf Framework Standards for Accreditation are not intended to compete with or replace national guidelines for informatics courses. They shall augment them by providing Europe-wide reference points for outcomes of degree programmes in informatics. Thus, they provide a means for demonstrating the mutual compatibility of the accredited programmes.

The Euro-Inf Standards may be applied in two ways: First, in countries where a national system for assessing informatics programmes already exists, recognition of national accreditation certificates as having achieved the proposed EU standards can be immediate if the existing arrangements are consistent with these Framework Standards.

Alternatively, in countries where no national informatics accreditation system yet exists, the Framework Standards can be directly applied to relevant programmes, or used as a starting basis for the Standards and Procedures of newly created Accreditation Agencies.

The Framework Standards describe the programme (desired learning-) outcomes of an accredited programme but allow for considerable variation in the individual emphasis of the higher education programmes. They do not address conditions of access to programmes: these are handled by Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), in accordance with any national regulations and/or requirements including new and innovative programmes.

As regards their scope, the Euro-Inf Standards are intended to:

- be widely applicable and inclusive, enabling eligibility of a wide range of possible approaches to informatics higher education
- handle the diversity of content of informatics degree programmes, including, for instance, aspects of business, administration, management, education, health, forensics, and security, embedded systems or information systems in informatics devices, applications and services, often involving some element of criticality, involving safety or security; research and development, e.g. biologically inspired computing, e-science or Grid computing
- be relevant for (academic) informatics study programmes leading to a First or to a Second Cycle Degree
- facilitate in particular accreditation of trans-national joint- and double degree programmes.

The Euro-Inf Standards shall not explicitly refer to, but on the other hand shall not exclude, programmes delivered by e-learning (distance learning), lifelong learning or any other type of learning delivery.

III. Professional Recognition of Informatics Degrees

The ultimate goal of the Euro-Inf Project is to facilitate Europe-wide professional recognition by the competent national authorities of the informatics degrees awarded by study programmes accredited on the basis of the programme outcomes and accreditation criteria defined in the Euro-Inf Framework Standards.

The Euro-Inf Standards are concerned only with the accreditation of the education base of the initial professional formation. It is for the appropriate authority in each country to determine whether a programme is of sufficient quality and relevance as the education base for registration or qualification for professional practice in that country, or if further education, training or industrial experience are necessary. The Euro-Inf Quality Label is intended to assist such decisions, and particularly support cross-recognition of those that involve transnational recognition.

It can be expected that achievement of informatics degrees accredited to the Euro-Inf Standard as FCD and SCD, possibly with additional requirements, will usually lead, in due course, to professional practice at levels (d) or (e) of professional qualifications, defined in Article 11, Directive 2005/36/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council on the recognition of professional qualifications (September 07, 2005).

IV. Glossary

This glossary is informed by the official documents of the Bologna Process listed under Section 4.2. Furthermore, the concept definitions show meanings relevant to the context of informatics higher education and the purpose of the Euro-Inf Project. Terms that are normally used in more generic contexts (e.g. the EHEA Framework for Qualifications) have been - where applicable – made more specific to this context.

1. Definitions

a *Accreditation*

Accreditation of an informatics degree programme is the primary result of a process used to ensure the suitability of that programme as the entry route to the informatics profession. Accreditation involves a periodic assessment against accepted standards of informatics education. It is essentially based on a peer review process, undertaken by appropriately trained and independent teams comprising peers from both academia and informatics

practice. The process normally involves both scrutiny of data and a structured visit to the Higher Education Institution (HEI) running the programme.

The Euro-Inf Accreditation label is intended to assist decisions if a programme, accredited or not, is of sufficient quality and relevance as the education base for registration or qualification for professional practice in that country, or if further education, training or industrial experience are necessary, and particularly those that involve trans-national recognition.

b Accreditation Agency

An Accreditation agency in the context of Euro-Inf is an independent, national and legally recognized body that develops educational standards, criteria and procedures and conducts expert visits and peer reviews to assess whether or not those criteria are met. It is self-evaluated and externally reviewed according to the European Standards and Guidelines.

c Accreditation criteria

Accreditation criteria in the context of the Euro-Inf Framework Standards denote the criteria for assessment and Accreditation of informatics study programmes.

d Auditing visit

An auditing visit is understood as an on-site visit within the scope of an Accreditation or assessment process to verify the content of a submitted self-assessment report.

e Assessment

Assessment is the process of systematic gathering, quantifying and using information to judge the effectiveness and adequacy of something against a published standard. It implies evaluation of core activities. It is a necessary basis for a formal Accreditation decision.

f Competence

Competence is the proven ability to use knowledge, skills and personal, social and / or methodological abilities, in work or study situations and in professional and / or personal development.

g Computing

Synonym for →Informatics

h Course

Synonym for →Programme (or: degree programme)

i Credit

A quantified means of expressing the volume of learning based on the achievement of learning outcomes and their associated workload.

j Curriculum

A curriculum is a programme of courses to be taken in pursuit of a degree. It provides information on educational processes of a study programme. It spells out which goals and objectives should be achieved, which topics should be covered and which methods are to be used for learning, teaching and evaluation.

k Cycle

the three sequential levels identified by the Bologna Process (first cycle, second cycle and third cycle) within which all European higher education qualifications are located.

l Educational Objectives

Educational objectives that are defined by the HEI in terms of Learning outcomes (knowledge, skills, and competences) to be achieved by the students in the course of a study programme. The particular modules of the study programme are conceived that way that they enable students to achieve the overarching programme educational objectives. The focus of assessment of the study programme lies on

- whether the study programme enables the achievement of the programme educational objectives, respectively, if the educational objectives correspond to the →Programme (Learning) Outcomes
- whether the modules enable the achievement of their →Specific Learning Outcomes

m Discipline

A discipline is a field of study or knowledge, such as physics, geology and biology and - in the context of this document - →Informatics.

n Europe/European

Europe/European refers to those countries that are signatories to the Bologna Process, whilst 'national' is used to describe the contexts within each of those countries or education systems.

o European Higher Education Area

The construction by 2010 of a European Higher Education Area (EHEA) where students and staff may move freely and have their qualifications recognised is goal of the Bologna Process. The Bergen Communiqué states that the EHEA is structured around three cycles, where each level has the function of preparing the student for the labour market, for further competence building and for active citizenship. The overarching framework for qualifications, the agreed set of European standards and guidelines for quality assurance and the recognition of degrees and periods of study are also key characteristics of the structure of the EHEA. Furthermore, the social dimension of the Bologna Process is a constituent part of the EHEA.

p First and Second Cycle Degree

In accordance with the EHEA framework, the Accreditation process will distinguish between programmes of the First and Second Study Cycles, defined in accord with the “Dublin Qualification Descriptors“, developed by the Joint Quality Initiative and the Report “A Framework for Qualification of the European Higher Education Area“, both documents endorsed by the Bergen Ministerial meeting of May 2005.

The terms “First Cycle Degree” and “Second Cycle Degree” (and their acronyms FCD and SCD), are used to avoid any possible misinterpretation associated with the use of specific terms such as Bachelor, Master, etc., that are used with different meanings in different countries of the EHEA. In this context, the term “Cycle” is used to describe a study programme leading to an academic degree while the term “Degree” describes a qualification awarded to an individual by a recognised HEI after successful completion of a study programme. In a credit accumulation system the programme is completed through the accumulation of a specified number of credits awarded for the achievement of a specific set of →Learning outcomes.

q Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area

An overarching framework that makes transparent the relationship between European national higher education frameworks of qualifications and the →Qualifications (higher education) they contain. It is a mechanism of interlinking national frameworks.

r Informatics

Being conscious about the ongoing and yet unresolved struggle to define the term informatics, Euro-Inf abstains from the attempt to define this multifaceted discipline for its purposes. This is primarily to ensure the inclusiveness of the Euro-Inf framework standards. However, not all European countries might be familiar with the term informatics. In the United Kingdom, for instance, the term →Computing is used instead. Hence, whenever the term “informatics” is used in the Euro-Inf documents, it also refers to its British equivalent “computing”.

s Informatics Graduate

Someone who successfully completes an accredited programme in informatics (but is not necessarily a practitioner yet).

t (Informatics) Specialisation

In the context of the Euro-Inf programme outcomes, the term informatics specialisation refers to the subject of study within a programme as part of the broader discipline of informatics.

u Knowledge

Knowledge is the outcome of the collection and assimilation of information through learning.

v Learning outcomes

Statements of what a learner is expected to know, understand and/or be able to do at the end of a period of learning. In the context of Euro-Inf, the term “learning outcomes” refers to capabilities achieved through specific →Modules, seminars, lectures or other sub-periods of learning within a study programme. Competences, skills and knowledge gained by the successful completion of an informatics study programme are referred to as →Programme (Learning) Outcomes.

w Module

A module forms a package of achievements with coordinated content, which is assessed jointly within the examination framework during the course. The creation of modules is oriented towards the →(Programme) Educational Objectives. Each module results in a set of achievements (→Specific Learning Outcomes) that are assessed jointly within an examination during the study programme. A module is thus the smallest unit for which ECTS credits are awarded.

x Programme (or: degree programme)

Integrated course of study leading to an academic degree. In the context of Euro-Inf, the term is used to describe a programme leading to a First or Second Cycle Degree as referred to in the Bologna Declaration. “Course” is often used interchangeably with Programme.

y (Programme) Educational Objectives

→Educational Objectives

z Programme (Learning) Outcomes

(Statements on) the specific →Competences, →Skills and →Knowledge gained by the successful completion of an informatics study programme. Programme Outcomes are developed on the basis of the qualifications required from graduates of these programmes to enter a career in the informatics profession. An important assessment requirement is that the programme outcomes are consistent with the →(Programme) Educational Objectives.

The programme outcomes defined in the present Euro-Inf Framework Standards are designed to be compatible with the general framework outlined in the “Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area” prepared by the Bologna Follow-up Group on the basis of the „Dublin Qualification Descriptors“. However, the descriptors for programme outcomes in the Euro-Inf Framework Standards are more specific with respect to the competences required for the informatics profession.

aa Qualification descriptors

Generic statements of the outcomes of study. They provide clear points of reference that describe the main outcomes of a qualification often with reference to national levels. In the

context of the Euro-Inf Framework Standards, the term programme (learning) outcomes is used equivalently to Qualification Descriptors.

bb Qualifications (higher education)

Any degree, diploma or other certificate issued by a competent authority attesting that particular learning outcomes have been achieved, normally following the successful completion of a recognised higher education programme of study.

cc Reference Points

Non-prescriptive indicators that support the articulation of qualifications, learning outcomes and/or other related concepts.

The Euro-Inf Framework Standards are intended to provide a reference point for those developing or reviewing national Accreditation systems for informatics education. It does not aim at competing with or replacing national guidelines for informatics courses.

dd Skills

Skills are the ability to apply →Knowledge and use know-how to complete tasks and solve problems.

ee Specialisation

In the context of the Euro-Inf Programme (Learning) Outcomes, the term specialisation refers to the subject of a study programme as part of the broader discipline of informatics.

ff Specific Learning Outcomes

Statements of what the student knows, respectively what he is expected to know, understand and/or be able to do after having completed a unit or period of learning, such as, in the context of Euro-Inf, a →Module. The specific learning outcomes are outlined in the module descriptions and contribute to the achievement of the overall →Educational Objectives.

gg Syllabus

A course outline that delineates course requirements, grading criteria, course content, faculty expectations, deadlines, examination dates, grading policies, and other relevant course information.

hh Workload

a quantitative measure of the learning activities that may feasibly be required for the achievement of the learning outcomes (e.g. lectures and seminars, practical work, private study, information retrieval, research, examinations).

ii Quality Assurance System

A Quality Assurance System is an ongoing process of assessing, guaranteeing, maintaining and improving the quality of a higher education institution or a programme. It is assumed that all programmes to be Euro-Inf-accredited fulfil the criteria set out in the ENQA 'Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area'. These Standards are concerned with ensuring the quality of the educational process, whereas Euro-Inf Framework Standards regard the content and standard of informatics education for professional qualification. Thus, the two overlap and have some common concerns but they are not the same. It has been checked that there is no inconsistency between the Euro-Inf Framework Standards, the ENQA Standards, or any other relevant document.

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The Euro-Inf Partner Institutions are:

ASIIN - The German Accreditation Agency
Specialised in Accrediting Degree
Programs in Engineering, Informatics, the
Natural Sciences and Mathematics



CEPIS - The Council of European
Professional Informatics Societies



The University of Applied Sciences of
Hamburg, Informatics Department



The University of Paderborn, Department
of Computer Science

