Quality Assurance: The example of RePIC

Quality assurance and enhancement in the RePIC degree programme will be fully compatible with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) for Eligibility (Status, Joint Design and Delivery, Cooperation Agreements); Learning Outcomes (Level, Disciplinary Field, Achievements); Study Programme (Curriculum, Credits, Workload); Admission and Recognition; Learning, Teaching and Assessment (Learning and teaching, Assessments of students); Resources (Staff, Facilities); Transparency and Documentation; and Quality Assurance. The European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes approved by the EHEA ministers in May 2015 serves as a second reference.

Institutional QA for learning and teaching is a shared responsibility of staff and students at all participating universities in UNIC, and the RePIC Partner Universities will take deliberate steps to bring about continuous improvement in the effectiveness of the learning experience of students from project results and achievements.

The joint quality management of RePIC combines and uses well-proven quality management instruments of the individual Partners and new joint instruments such as the External Advisory Board, following the principle "plan-do-check-act". The responsibility for the joint quality management lies with the ASB. RePIC has set up a comprehensive Quality Assurance framework for internal and external QA that will involve the relevant stakeholders. Internal and external evaluation processes with its continuous PDCA-Circle and evaluation instruments will be defined and described in detail in an Internal RePIC Quality Handbook, outlining the procedures and instruments for evaluating the programme. Part One of this Handbook is already internally available.

(1) External quality assurance will comprise "critical friend input" in form of the regular feedback from the members of the External Advisory Board and expert comments received from invited guest lecturers and researchers, participants in the City Labs. Feedback loops with selected stakeholders every two years will generate ideas and critical input for programme enhancement. External Programme accreditation, following the European Approach, repeated every sixth years, is an important element of RePIC QA. It safeguards that provision of RePIC is fully developed and adequately resourced.

(2) Internal quality assurance continuously involves the students through questionnaire based feedback on all modules in each semester, the survey on service quality and regular graduate surveys, giving benchmark data on student experience to compare student experience across academic Partners and identify areas of concern. Teaching Analysis Polls (TAP), a moderated interview technique for qualitative evaluation) will be used for evaluation of the four tracks in Semester 2, since the number of 10 to 20 students per track is too small to guarantee the anonymity necessary for classic questionnaire evaluation. Moderated by qualified staff, the students identify (in groups) conducive and difficult elements in the respective track and suggest possibilities for improvement, which are then discussed by the teaching staff and lead to concrete recommendations for improvement.

TAP stimulate an exchange about the teaching and learning processes between the teachers and the students and strengthens students' responsibility for their own learning process. The AEC reports annually on the number of examinations taken and passed and possible recommendations resulting from the analysis of the examination data. In addition to these data, the ASB will be provided with further evaluation results that the Partner Universities collect as part of their university's internal quality management.

Results of such local evaluation of programme quality shall be cross-checked between the Partners and then discussed in the ASB. All this information is the basis for suggestions to enhance the quality of

programme delivery and further curriculum development. The RePIC faculty, i.e., all academics teaching in the programme, convene once per year to discuss ways to enhance content and cohesion of the curriculum. This annual internal programme review, overseen by the ASB, assisted by the PAB and the EAB, identifies strengths and weaknesses of the programme, and plans for improvements (including analysis of programme statistics, student evaluations of modules, staff evaluations, response to any issues, action plan with feedback to programme team). Students are the most important stakeholder group in the discussion of the evaluation results and possible conclusions, along with the teachers. Therefore, the results and conclusions to improve the quality of the curriculum and the quality of student services are always reflected upon with the PAB, which has an equal number of students and teachers, and measures are mutually agreed upon. Each measure or change is checked for effectiveness in the next evaluation cycle and modified again if necessary.

Appropriate involvement of students in all matters of QA is secured through the establishment of the PAB. It should be noted that there are considerable back-up resources to allow the student access to a network of support at all Partner Universities. Local RePIC Coordinators welcome the students at every location in semesters 1, 2, 3, and 4. Every student will be allocated a mentor teacher available to ensure that the student settles into the RePIC environment and make progress according to plan.