Peer Learning Activity

The development of blended and online programmes in European higher education

Issues of quality assurance

VERSION 24/11/2017

Summary report

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1. Introduction

This PLA is initiated to find answers to a changing world of education with emerging trends in online and blended education. In European and US universities, three areas of provision emerge consistently (See annex 1):

- degree education
- continuing education
- open education (MOOCs, OERs)

Blended education will raise the quality and efficiency of degree education, facing large numbers of students and lower staff/students ratios.

Online education will upscale the area of continuing education and continuous professional development (CPD) by offering flexible and scalable courses with a larger outreach responding to the needs of learners at work, who face longer careers and career shifts.

The approach taken by this PLA has identified next steps in the development of high quality blended degree and online continuing education in a dialogue between main stakeholders: universities, governments, quality assurance agencies and students.

Only in dialogue between these stakeholders we can come to a favourable environment for further innovating education. This PLA shows a shared responsibility to accelerate innovation and to find ways to improve.

Main goals of the PLA were:

- Identifying each other's perspectives, roles, challenges, needs, experiences and expertise.
- Achieve a common understanding and identifying the rationale of blended and online approaches in degree education and short learning programmes
- Analyse positive and negative forces on innovation in degree education and SLPs through a force field analysis
- Identify ways forward and lower thresholds in innovating education
- Identify the expertise needed
- Identify projects related to the topic of the PLA.

The PLA took place over two days and joined experts from quality assurance agencies including the ENQA Working Quality Assurance and E-learning, university representatives, government representatives and European associations in higher education.

The report is structured in accordance with the objectives of the PLA and draws on a range of presentations, cases and workshop discussions that forms this PLA.

The report can be used to guide and support the work of the stakeholders and recommendations will be submitted to the council of ministers (Paris, May 2018) as input to the Bologna process.

2. Contextual changes

In European universities three areas of provision emerge: *degree education* as the backbone of a university; *continuing education* and continuous professional development, which probably will exceed the number of degree students; and *open education* which emerged mainly by the MOOC movement. Universities attempt policies and strategies to define their profile in these areas, which can be complementary to each other and to some extent interwoven (See annex 1).

Digital modes of teaching and learning can solve problems higher education is facing today and will offer new opportunities for teaching and learning in each of these areas. They will innovate and even transform higher education provisions in the course of next years:

- Blended degree education will raise the quality and efficiency of degree education, facing large numbers of students and lower staff/students ratios.
- Blended and online education will upscale the area of continuing education and continuous professional development (CPD) by offering flexible courses with a large outreach responding to the needs of learners at work, who face longer careers and career shifts.
- MOOCs are offered online only, providing massive and open learning opportunities for all, promoting engagement in the knowledge society.

Blended and online systems are important to accelerate innovation and to keep pace with the needs of learners of all ages and of society.

According to labour experts, the risk that qualifications, obtained by degrees in initial higher education, become obsolete is increasing by the digitalisation wave in the economy and by longer careers. European estimations demonstrate that more than 25% of the 30- to 55-years old employees struggle with this problem. Hence, this is also a social risk. Economic research shows that not following continuing education is an early good predictor for job loss. Unemployed people have less chance to find a durable job. In relation to the increasing age of retirement, the social risks will become more pronounced and in parallel, the needs for continuing education and CPD as well (Sels, Rector KU Leuven, 2017).

Also, fact sheets of the European Commission show that neither the EU attainment objectives for higher education nor for lifelong learning are achieved and that there are dramatic differences between member states, although progress is made. 40% of the employers face problems with recruiting workforce with the right qualifications. The EU employment rate is 53% for low-skilled young people and 80% for high-skilled. SLPs can compensate for these figures at a later stage of life, which is needed in view of these labour market needs.

Changing times need new solutions, touching upon the structure of higher education provisions. There is a need for investment in lifelong learning in European societies, in particular in continuous education / continuous professional development. All member states need to extend their provisions.

In the area of continuing education, the deployment of short learning programmes (SLPs) is a most important solution. The *online* provision of SLP`s makes them eve more scalable and flexible. They facilitate the accessibility of courses by learners and can be taken in combination with a job at all stages of life. SLPs should be awarded with appropriate qualifications (e.g. certificates, diplomas), corresponding with the European Qualification Framework (See annex 3).

3. Participants in the PLA

Main stakeholders to pave the way for further innovation in education are:

- Learners
- Universities
- Quality assurance agencies
- Regions, governments
- The European Commission

In this Peer Learning Activity focusing on Quality Assurance of blended and online programmes, we have brought stakeholders together in a constructive dialogue towards awareness and alignment on new steps in the uptake of new modes of teaching in degree and continuing education (see agenda, annex A).

Participants in the EADTU-ENQA PLA were:

Higher Education Institutions
1. AGH, Krakow
2. Anadolu University, Eskisehir
3. Dublin City University
4. EduOpen,
5. FIED, Université Pierre et Marie Curie, Paris
6. Hellenic Open University, Patras
7. KU Leuven
8. Marie Curie University Lublin
9. Open University Cyprus
10. Open University of the Netherlands
11. The Open University, United Kingdom
12. University of Applied Sciences, Tampere
13. TU Delft
14. UNED
15. UniDistance Switzerland
16. UNINETTUNO, Rome
17. University of Jyväskylä
18. Universitat Oberta de Catalunya

Quality Assurance Agencies
1. Finnish Education Evaluation Centre FINEEC
2. Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI)
3. Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education (CY.Q.A.A.)
4. AQ Austria
5. Evalag, Evaluation Agency Baden-Wuerttemberg
6. AQU, Catalunya
7. AAQ, Switzerland
8. ASHE, Croatia
9. ACSUCYL, Spain
10. UKÄ, Sweden
11. NVAO, the Netherlands
12. Fundación para el Conocimiento, Madrid (FCM)

Umbrella organisations
- European Student Union (ESU)
- European Association for Quality Assurance (ENQA)
- European University Association (EUA)
- European Association for Distance Teaching Universities (EADTU)

Governments
- European Commission (EAC)
- Flemish Ministry of Education

4. PLA approach

On day 1, the EADTU-ENQA PLA was opened by the following panel members**:**

Anja Oskamp, President EADTU and Rector OUNL

Esther Huertas Hidalgo (AQU Catalunya), Chair ENQA WG E-learning

Noel Vercruyse, Flemish Ministry of Education

Vanessa.DEBIAIS-SAINTON, Deputy Head of Unit Higher Education, EC-DG EAC.

It was emphasised that we are living in a rapidly changing world, in need for adaptive, flexible and scalable education. Universities need to innovate to deploy the talents of students in degree education and continuous professional development. Therefore, face to face environments have to be extended with blended and online learning environments. Quality assurance agencies consequently have to anticipate on changes in education and support further innovation.

It was noted that innovation through blended education as well as post-graduate short learning programmes or lifelong learning were rarely on the agenda of the Bologna process. A Working Group of the Bologna Follow up Group is now discussing the digitalization of higher education, which is broader than blended education, and will propose this on the agenda of the Council of Ministers on the Bologna process in Paris in May, 2018. The aim is to put more effort in digital higher education.

Digital higher education is not an end in itself, but it will raise the quality of mainstream/on campus degree education and it will create a new environment for an increasing number of students following continuing education. By its flexibility, online approaches will make short learning programmes at the post-graduate level accessible at a large scale to meet huge needs of the economy and society.

The higher education curriculum in the future will be blended and will better respond to the needs of students as well as to the diversity of students. Higher education at all levels will be more accessible and more inclusive. This needs innovation and trust, in which quality assurance is essential.

To implement blended and online higher education and to make it a priority, a program is to be set up by the European Commission, e.g. for policy experimentation. This would include for example blended teaching and learning, the virtual classroom and multi-campus education.

With regard to quality assurance of blended and online education, EADTU and ENQA collaborate already a long time. Their cooperation within the SEQUENT project (2013-2015) has led to a picture of quality assurance policies and of the major quality assurance approaches for blended and online education. Both organizations have opted now for a dialogue on developments of blended education

and online short learning programmes and on quality assurance in a shared responsibility to stimulate innovation in higher education.

We have to find out what the evolvement of European higher education to the three main educational provisions means for quality assurance and what favourable conditions are for innovation in (blended) degree education, (online) mainly post-graduate short learning programmes, and open education (MOOCs mainly).

The panel welcomed the approach of a dialogue between stakeholders as all believe that we can take innovation in education in Europe to the next level by alignment and cooperation. All organizations, present in this PLA, are partners in this dialogue.

Aim of the PLA

The welcoming panel was followed by an introduction on this Peer Learning Activity on QA in blended and online education by *George Ubachs, Managing Director EADTU*. He explained that blended education is to be explored for further enhancing the quality of on campus education and making education more effective. Blended education also contributes to solutions for the issue of decreasing staff-staff ratios. In blended education, the right balance between face-to-face and online education is sought. This implies the use of new pedagogies. Blended and online education is not just copying on-campus teaching to an online environment, but uses new forms of curriculum and course design to optimise the learning process.

Online offerings in Short Learning Programmes serve new target groups for continuous professional development by more flexibility and scalability. Continuous education is offering courses to regions, countries and the international world.

He further emphasized the need for dialogue between stakeholder organisations to facilitate a favourable environment for innovating education and for quality assurance. This requires the sharing of expertise, revising regulatory frameworks and developing and aligning national and institutional strategies to support innovation and quality in higher education.

The PLA started with 2 dedicated presentations on state of play of blended education by Stijn van Laer and Short Learning Programmes by Anja Oskamp to set the framework of this PLA.

5. The changing pedagogical landscape: blended degree education

Blended education is the dominating trend in innovation in on campus degree education. Because of the extension and enrichment of the learning environment, digital education also supports other innovations such as problem- or project-based learning, inquiry learning, collaborative learning, virtual seminars and labs, or learning in multi-campus or international settings.

The concept of blended learning itself is far from clear-cut. The literature spans various definitions and meanings, e.g. "the thoughtful integration of conventional and digital methods of teaching and learning" (Graham, et al., 2013). It is agreed that the digital is not a supplement and does not simply replicate aspects of the conventional – each should enhance the other. Blended learning combines conventional and digital methods to achieve an "optimal exploitation of ICT and internet" integrated with the conventional technologies of physical material, and co-presence in space and time. The value of blending the two is that digital methods offer much greater personalization, flexibility, inclusiveness and efficiency than conventional methods can, but they have to be used appropriately (Laurillard, 2015).

For this PLA we use a common understanding of blended as *"learning that happens in an instructional context which is characterized by a deliberate combination of online and classroom-based interventions to instigate and support learning."* (Boelens, Van Laer, De Wever, & Elen, 2015).

The goal of blended education is:

1) more effective pedagogy;
2) increased convenience and access;
3) increased cost effectiveness.

Blended teaching and learning practice in degree education is increasing, primarily because of the ubiquitous presence of digital technology and the increase in the digital skills of both students and teachers. EUA studies revealed that a majority of HEIs have established blended learning courses and programmes. But, more than half of the institutions applied blended teaching and learning in 'some' faculties or by 'individual teachers' (Gaebel, Kupriyano et al., (2014). The Changing Pedagogical Landscape study made clear that even within frontrunner institutions only 20% or less of the courses are blended (Haywood, Conelly, Henderikx, et al. 2016). Moreover, many course models used just replicate face to face courses or don't meet the requirements of high quality course design.

A force field analysis with regard to innovation by implementing blended teaching and learning was done within EADTU.

Positive factors for succeeding blended teaching and learning implementation in degree education were: the strong presence of digital technology at universities and digital skills of students and teachers; the availability of strong learning environments; good practices in blended teaching and learning, although incrementally dispersed; the experience with MOOCs; the need for enhancing quality for large student numbers of students; the need for covering all types of learning; where applicable a strong institutional leadership. These positive factors are important for anchoring change processes.

Negative factors were: academic culture not in favour of innovation; attitudes of students and staff towards online learning; leadership not engaged for innovation by blended teaching and learning; no policies, strategies, concepts, frameworks; misconceptions on blended/online teaching; low awareness of innovative pedagogies; blended teaching and learning competences of staff not enough developed; no adequate solutions for the changing workload of staff; partial innovations only, no maturity model; no incentives for career development; no substantial budget allocated for innovation; weak governmental strategies and support.

Developments in universities are going slow and efforts are dispersed and not systemic enough. A deep change in institutions is needed.

6. The changing pedagogical landscape: short learning programmes

Within the area of university level continuous education, the role of short learning programmes will increase, serving large numbers of students with a restricted study time horizon and meeting needs of the economy and society at large.

Short learning programmes are organized around a specific topic, relevant for continuous education / continuous professional development. They vary in number of credits (largely between 5 and 30 ECTS). To be effective, SLPs are to be developed in a coherent design with specific pedagogies,

adapted to the target groups envisaged and preferably in collaboration with stakeholders (businesses, innovation managers, etc.).

SLP's are organized at all levels: preparation courses, foundation level, post-bachelor level, post-master level. They lead to a variety of qualifications: awards, certificates, post-graduate certificates, diplomas. ECTS is mostly used, but also CEUs, especially in courses where only attendance is registered. Across universities, qualifications are not always defined according to the European Qualification Framework (EFQ) which is hindering transparency in this respect.

Many students for continuous education and continuous professional development are not degree-seeking, others are. Often, universities offer the possibility to students to chain modules and certificates in order to obtain a degree (bachelor, master).

SLPs should be responsive to new needs and make use of new technologies, to facilitate flexible access by people at work. Yet, not many universities organise *short learning programmes online*. Reasons to provide SLP's online are related to upscaling participation, being flexible for students at work and broadening the outreach of the course across a country or even internationally.

Most European universities already organize a range of certified continuing education or professional development programmes across all faculties. They are academically or professionally oriented. These programmes are mainly face to face, on a fixed day (a Friday, a Saturday). Many of them are short learning programmes, awarded by a certificate or a diploma. They reach small numbers of students as they are often not flexible enough to be attended by students at work. Many universities make special arrangements for working students in evening and week-end classes. In this case, more students are attending these courses, but these solutions are neither scalable, nor enough flexible enough to meet the needs in the economy and in society.

The modularisation of a degree curriculum as such doesn't suffice to meet the needs of 25+ learners. SLPs should be embedded in a learner-oriented organization such as *university extensions*. These extensions are only dealing with education for adult students. Student numbers can largely exceed the numbers in mainstream degree programmes in the US.

Open universities from their origin organize flexible education for students at work. They have developed pedagogical and organizational approaches for reaching out to these students and they are used to large scale operations.

Traditional universities are also developing strategies for a systematic approach to continuous education involving flexible and therefore online solutions. Some are frontrunners in this respect. In order to be successful, they need to build a kind of extension studies structure, as is done already by some European and by US universities (Stanford, Harvard, MIT).

We find examples of online short learning programmes in traditional and in open universities (see annex 4)

7. Panel discussion on blended and online education

A panel of representatives of the university sector reflected on this introduction with Michael Gaebel (EUA), Esther Huertas Hidalgo (ENQA), Adam Gajek (ESU), Alejandro Tiana Ferrer EADTU), Noel Vercruysse (Flemish government).

Universities and blended and online education

This part of the panel discussion was introduced by Michael Gaebel (EUA) and Alejandro Tiana Ferrer (UNED).

Now and in the future, face to face and online education should be considered as equal approaches in higher education.

Blended degree education is a natural development and is activating innovation. Front-runner universities don't wait, they just practice it.

Short learning programmes and their modular structure are attractive for the further development of lifelong learning, which is needed in view of career development in the modern economy. In general, bachelor-master programmes don't work in lifelong learning as students don't have the time for such long trajectories combining work and study.

The practice of blended and online learning as reported in the concept note for the PLA has to some extent improved. Compared with 2014, the Trends-figures 2018 will show a small evolvement. The overall acceptance of online learning increased. But, much more strategic efforts are needed in order to accelerate the innovation we need.

Not so much the new technologies are important, but the innovative pedagogical approaches linked to them. Actually, the attention for new teaching formats is growing, like the flipped classroom, problem-based learning and collaborative learning in small groups. Also, strengthening the link between research and education is a challenge which universities are facing because of increasing student numbers. New approaches and solutions for teaching and learning are supported by blended and online learning.

For innovation, the continuous professional development and enhancement of teaching staff is important. This will also change the culture of an institution. Some of the changes are not only linked to digital education, they are caused by them, e.g. MOOCs (2013).

Also EUA has a stronger focus on learning and teaching then in the first years of its existence. In September 2017, EUA organises the 1st dedicated Teaching and Learning Forum in Paris, dealing with innovation in higher education, including the role of digital education.

Funding is one of the main instruments to stimulate the institutional development of universities with regard to teaching and learning, but creating space for innovation in the career development of teachers is a challenge as well.

Digital learning and the development of continuous education (short learning programmes) should become part of the Bologna process in order to promote developments in all European countries. Next to initial education (bachelor-master), short learning programmes (foundation, post-graduate) should be part of the European Higher Education Area. It would give students trust in all higher education provisions, also at the post-initial level. Hence, a common understanding on these programmes is needed.

Short learning programmes are not new. In open and distance teaching universities, they are organized in different formats. Students can also take single courses and modules. The OUUK organizes short programmes in different sizes, which are awarded with a certificate or diploma, according to the size of the program and aligned with the European Qualification Framework (EQF). The UNED in Spain organizes expert and specialist programmes as well as non-official university

master degrees (next to the state master degrees) for continuing education, in line with the Spanish degree system.

Online and distance education is becoming increasingly attractive for students, when provisions are in place. In Spain, the number of distance teaching students at UNED has increased to +15% of the total student population. Taking into account distance students in traditional universities, +20% of Spanish students are studying at a distance now. According to a survey, 30% of the distance teaching students report that they had no other real option to study, while 70% choose deliberately for distance education for reasons of flexibility.

The need for online education is growing quickly as a consequence of rapid changes in society and in the economy. Short learning programmes and continuing education are needed and their number will grow in the next years. Quality is essential for continuing education and SLPs as well recognition and accreditation. However, sometimes inadequacies are found in the current procedures of quality assurance: they are not always adapted to online and distance education. Agencies should reflect on this and a dialogue with the institutions concerned is needed.

With regard to the accreditation of SLPs and non- degree or non-formal education, there is not enough experience. SLPs need to be responsive to immediate needs. Therefore, ex-post procedures are most important as ex-ante procedures might slow down the planning and implementation of SLPs.

Institutions should link qualifications for SLPs to the European Qualification Framework.

Students and digital education
Adam Gajek of ESU introduced this part of the panel

Students are aware that digital education is very much connected with students' needs, notably the aspect of student-centred learning. Blended education is a basis for the future of teaching and learning.

In first instance, students have not been prepared for digital education, although they have digital skills. It is important that they feel comfortable in a blended learning course. They are used to (large) classroom teaching, which they enjoy as well. Student satisfaction is an important factor for study success.

By the flexibility of online learning, universities are able to strengthen the accessibility of their programmes and courses, to enlarge student numbers, to reach out to non-traditional students combining work and study or not being able to attend courses for other reasons. Hence, online education creates new opportunities for students to take up a course.

With regard to quality assurance, the current procedures focus on traditional students in traditional courses.

Blended and online learning is part of the future of institutions, not only for mainstream degree education, but also for continuing education and mature students. Education should support students during the learning process, using new pedagogies. This will make higher education more effective.

Governments and digital education
Noel Vercruysse of the Flemish Ministry of Education started the discussion with an overview of policies and strategies with regard to online and blended education.

Short learning program (SLPs) should be conceived in a broader sense than the short cycle foundation programmes in the Yerevan Declaration. They refer to all qualification levels in the European Qualification Framework and in most cases they can be defined as post-graduate programmes, although short programmes at the foundation level are important as well for meeting needs in society.

The role of governments is to create favourable framework conditions to capitalize on the opportunities of digital education in higher education. The organization of SLPs belongs to the autonomy of institutions.

This framework should embrace different aspects (see Flemish decree on higher education):

- The funding parameters and the funding formulas should be equal for traditional and online/distance education
- The funding statute of full-time and part-time students should be equal
- Give extra funding to institutions for students combining work and study, and favour flexible study paths
- Recognize prior learning in line with one of the objectives of the Bologna process and recognise SLPs and MOOCs
- Make the structures for short learning programmes and degree education permeable in order to facilitate the use of SLPs as building blocks

Quality assurance should be comprehensive and not fragmented. Degree and non-degree programmes should be dealt with together.

The digitalisation of higher education means also making knowledge available to citizens or giving it back to society, freely available. Also, new initiatives are emerging, like the University of Flanders in which the Flemish Television and Radio (VRT) cooperate with magazines, broadcasting short lectures of the five universities, which are further commented by the radio and the printed press.

Digital education has to meet challenges like the continuous professional development of staff and the architecture of universities, where physical space might be reduced.

Quality assurance and digital education
Esther Huertas Hidalgo (ENQA) dealt with quality assurance in online and blended education.

Quality assurance is one of the major action lines in the Bologna process and the development of the European Higher Education Area. ICT are changing the environment of higher education and new, Digital modes of teaching and learning change also teaching and learning processes. They have also an influence on the accessibility, flexibility and scalability of higher education, in particular in continuous education and continuous professional development.

ENQA has set up a working group to look into these new developments and how this can have implications for the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG), in particular the role of agencies in quality reviews for blended and online / distance programmes, how the understanding on quality assurance for new modes of teaching and learning is to be shared by higher education institutions and professionals/teaching staff within institutions, and how agencies do get the message across. The role of agencies is to stimulate and activate internal quality assurance structures in universities to assess e-learning innovation as a most important aspect of innovation in higher education.

The objectives of the ENQA WG on e-learning are:

- Create an inventory of sources on quality assurance and e-Learning.
- Agree on definition of e-learning.
- Agree on recommendations (QAA and HEIs).

In the logic of the European Standards and Guidelines, the applicability of standards has to be examined and how indicators can be fine-tuned, taking into account challenges from HEIs, government and quality assurance agencies. The working group aims at providing a generic framework and a common basis for national and institutional activities by those standards and guidelines for quality assurance. They should be applied to all higher education offered in the EHEA regardless of the mode of study or place of delivery (transnational education, e-learning, short courses…). Blended and online learning provisions fulfil the same standards (ESG) as traditional ones.

Thus, all types of e-learning are included as well as all phases in the learning process (e.g. e-assessment). It applies to all types of quality assurance activities and agencies (quality audits, program accreditation, institutional assessment…). Quality assurance can serve a variety of purposes: enhancement/improvement and accountability.

8. Main challenges and ways forward for blended degree education

The discussion groups on day 2 revealed following main challenges for blended degree education:

8.1 Governmental and European strategies and frameworks for innovation
8.2 Institutional strategy and cultural changes / mind-set
8.3 Pedagogical models and design for blended courses
8.4 New expertise needed and staff support
8.5 Student support
8.6 Including blended education in the quality framework of the university
8.7 Funding of innovation
8.8 Increased workload
8.9 Institutional evaluation, research and innovation

8.1 Governmental and European strategies and frameworks for innovation

Governments need to build policies, strategies and frameworks for innovation in higher education, notably for digital modes of teaching and learning (see The Changing Pedagogical Landscape, 2015). Some governments develop such strategies, policies and frameworks, eventually through their specialized agencies (SURF, Norgesuniversitetet, Higher Education Academy…). They create a favourable environment for innovating education in dialogue and cooperation with stakeholders, which inspire and stimulate universities. In countries, where governments are less active with regard to new modes of teaching and learning, universities miss strategic frameworks (CPL study, 2015).

At the European level, innovation and new modes of teaching and learning are not yet enough adopted in the Bologna process. A joint adoption by the Council of Ministers would accelerate innovation and raise the quality of higher education.

The European Commission can stimulate innovation by blended on line degree education, continuing education and continuing professional development.

Ways forward can be:

National governments

- Capture the state of affairs, current needs and opportunities on blended degree education (on campus), making a survey of the institutions and make a picture of the landscape, Involving an expert group
- Explore a maturity model for blended teaching and learning
- Organise a strategic working group (advisory) and develop a strategy at national level involving all stakeholders (university, students, social partners) and experts
- Activate continuous innovation
  - o Stimulate or organise continuous professional development of staff
  - o Stimulate institutional leadership for continuous innovation
  - o Fund Research & Innovation projects (R & I)

European Commission

- Develop a strategy document on digital higher education
- Support international cooperation, collaboration, share and exchange expertise European-wide
- Develop country reports
- Share and exchange good practices and propose recommendations on how to use technology for digital learning and digital assessment
- Support teacher education, sharing of teacher training programmes
- Fund projects (and simplified procedures for grant funding)

8.2 Institutional strategy and cultural changes

Challenges for universities are multiple, institutional leadership and strategies being core conditions for the development of blended degree education, the large extension of continuous education and open education (MOOCs). Generally, the infrastructure of universities (brick and mortar) and the technologies don't reflect the opportunities of digital education. Digital education requires new educational models and a new mind-set. Staff fears a higher workload. Staff support is needed. Digital education should be incorporated in the quality assurance system of the university. Universities face capacity problems with regard to staff to innovation (small number of faculty members, small numbers of professionals

Ways forward can be:

- Appoint a vice-rector for innovation, showing leadership with the support of the entire board and at all decision levels of the university (cultural change/mind-set)
- Develop strategies for continuous innovation in the institution, involving digital education in faculties and degree programmes, the extension of continuous education and continuous professional development and open education
- Promote cultural changes and mind-set to support the new institutional strategy
- Organise internal funding for innovation (grass-root funding, seed money, project funding)

8.3 Pedagogical models and design for blended courses

Compared to face to face education, course design for blended education is different. This requires new pedagogical models, based on evidence and sound theories on course design and teaching and learning (Laurillard, 2012, 2015; KVAB, 2015).

Ways forward can be:

- Create openness and awareness on the benefits and opportunities of blended learning, based on reports of good practice, reports on concepts, theories and evidence on course design
- Validate, align and engage in a maturity model for course design with different stages of development
- Transform gradually lecture-based courses in blended learning courses
- Publish patterns of good practice of course design in the institution(s)
- Create (inter-institutional) subject-bound groups to exchange good practice
- Deracinate mis-concepts and redress "implicit theories"
- Create awareness on the gap between current practice and advanced course design/maturity in blended learning

8.4 New expertise needed and staff support

One of the major strategies with regard to innovation and blended learning concerns the development of new expertise on blended teaching and learning within the institutions and the continuous development of staff. This can be supported by trans-institutional initiatives and the governments. Teaching and learning departments play a pivotal role in this.

Ways forward can be:

- Empower teaching staff by continuous professional development on blended learning and innovation, using a maturity model. Teaching and learning departments organize CPD for teaching staff
- Teaching and learning departments learning support staff in course design teams and identify patterns of good practice in their institution and in the partnership
- Create peer groups and subject area networks
- Teaching and learning departments are organizing institutional evaluation and research on the design, implementation and effects of blended teaching and learning
- Develop multimedia labs.

8.5 Student support

Blended and online learning require also different approaches to student support. Interactivity is a necessary feature in the teaching and learning process. In online learning, this can partially be replaced by a sequence of learning tasks and (automated) feedback on assessments. Also, interaction in discussion groups and in collaborative learning schemes are integrated in online and blended learning. Teaching staff is involved, but large students groups require an intervention structure which will not augment the workload and nevertheless is effective.

Ways forward can be:

- Student support is integrated in the design of the course and part of the pedagogical models used
- Teaching and learning departments support the design of group discussions and collaborative learning, guided by teaching staff
- Appropriate software for collaborative learning is available
- Students are made familiar with online programmes/technology behind it

8.6 Including blended education in quality frameworks

In many institutions, blended and online education is not yet systematically integrated in the quality framework of universities, while this has an impact on the pedagogies and the learning processes of institutions and probably on the quality of learning outcomes. ENQA already has set up a working group to define a set of ENQA recommendations, guidelines and policies.

Ways forward can be:

- Revision of the internal quality system including blended and online education
- ENQA developing recommendations, guidelines and policies for institutions
- Quality assurance agencies sharing good practices between them

8.7 Funding of innovation

The most important driver of change being governmental and institutional leadership and strategies, funding is an important instrument to stimulate and activate change. Funding comes from national governments or agencies or from institutions.

Ways forward can be:

- Create an institutional innovation fund with funding for different purposes: seed money, project funding, additional staff
- Fund projects which have a systemic impact (faculty/program level)
- Stimulate individual staff with seed money, prizes and career opportunities
- Create an innovation fund at the governmental level, including for large-scale innovation (cfr. France, Germany)
- Create an innovation agency/council at the governmental level

8.8 Increased workload

One of the concerns of individual staff is the increased workload, required from individual staff in the transition towards new modes of teaching and learning. There is as well a shift in the nature of teaching tasks, not necessarily increasing the total workload (Laurillard, 2015).

Ways forward can be:

- Work with multi-annual plans: designing and developing an online/course requires more time than implementing it
- Re-allocate resources and tasks to cope with increased workload
- Create course teams, dividing the work between staff

8.9 Institutional evaluation, research and innovation

The development and implementation of blended and online education require innovation processes and institutional change. This should be accompanied by institutional evaluation and research.

Ways forward can be:

- Define institutional objectives and plans as well the impact of new technologies on the course and curriculum level
- Evaluate if the objectives are reached and what the impact is of innovation and new pedagogical models.

9. Main challenges and ways forward for online short learning programmes

The discussion group on day 2 also dealt with challenges and ways forward for online short learning programmes.

In an introduction, Willem van Valkenburg explained about the implementation of short learning programmes at the Technical University of Delft. A policy and strategy framework for continuing education was developed on the basis of a vision shared by the Board. This includes professional courses and programmes online, leading to certificates and diplomas. Teaching "professional" learners was a completely new area for a brick and mortar university. In a first phase, the focus was on single courses e.g. (a professional education course, a MOOC, etc.) In a second phase, courses were grouped into short learning programmes, in diverse areas and awarded with a qualification (certificate, diploma,..). Courses are open and online, trying out things on purpose, in practice at bachelor or master level. ECTS are used, CEU (continuous education unit awards) when only attendance is required.

Courses are in English for reaching out to a global audience. They are developed for large groups of students.

Typically, according to the Delft experience, working students don't study more than 4-8 hours a week. Above this point, drop-out seems to increase.

TU-Delft has developed micro-masters, combining such courses and eventually MOOCs, e.g. on solar energy. Such a micro-course gives the right for a waiver in the master in solar energy. The experiment on solar energy reached out to 20000 students.

Professional certificate programmes have a workload of 20-40 hrs a week. They are awarded with a CEU as mainly attendance to the course is required.

The quality of courses is guaranteed by the university. E.g., when a course is part of an academic master program, this is guaranteed by the normal quality assurance and accreditation procedures. Ex-ante accreditation procedures can kill innovation as they can slow down development processes and are too slow for business needs.

MOOCs and new online courses get a pre-launch quality assurance, following a quality cycle by an internal committee and a course can be improved on their advice.

During the group sessions, all participants reported on challenges identified in relation to SLPs. Main challenges reported are:

8.1 Mind-set/ institutional policy and culture
8.2 Governmental and European policy
8.3 Lack of expertise in online education
8.4 Additional workload for teachers
8.5 Recognition
8.6 Accreditation
8.7 Clear business model
8.8 Diversity in offerings (e.g. level, size, certificate, format)
8.9 Finding SLPs / how to market
9.10 Making the connection with the field

9.1 Institutional policy and culture

Generally, European universities are not used to offer continuous education/continuous professional development at a large scale. The focus of faculties is on initial learning, not on continuous education.

Most existing initiatives for continuous education are too small and not scalable enough to face the needs of companies and of society at large.

The conceptualization and reflection on the role of SLPs will lead to change in the respective institutions: policies/strategies, staff and student support structures, business models and possible collaborations, and a new mind-set regarding continuing education. This will promote the systemic development of SLPs and CE/CPD as a new area of provision in higher education, next to degree education and open education. For this development, funding and optimized business models are important. Probably, student numbers in this area will exceed numbers in degree education.

Ways forward can be:

• Appoint a vice-rector for the development of the area of continuous education / continuous professional development and support massively this leadership

• Develop institutional policies and strategies for the large scale development of continuous education / CPD in the university

• Create a culture of innovation by inviting subject area leaders to develop SLP's for innovation and motivate teaching staff for continuing education / continuing professional development

• Invest in a university extension structure

9.2 Governmental and European policy

Generally, universities and policy makers align and engage on the principle of continuing education and lifelong learning. They engage not yet on a large scale and systemic deployment of continuous education and lifelong learning in the form of SLPs as a flexible response to increasing economic and cultural needs in the society of the future. Probably, these needs will equal the size of needs for mainstream degree education for the 18-25 students. Hence, this is an emergent new area of

provision that needs a rapid development as part of the higher education system. Europe needs knowledge, professional competences, culture and citizenship throughout all stages of life.

Integrating SLPs in higher education systems is important for the renewed strategy for higher education, because they make higher education more attainable for adult learners, who combine work and study or learn for personal development. Many of these learners have already a degree, others don't, but all will have longer careers and rapidly changing careers and are in need for updating innovative knowledge and skills. They respond to immediate economic knowledge and skills requirements in enterprises and to needs for cultural and personal development in society for learners with a study time horizon from 5 to 60 ECTS. Not all 25+ learners are able to plan a study of 120 or 180 ECTS while working.

Public authorities (governments, EU, regions) fail in their engagement to implement policies and strategies, frameworks, national recognition, standards, funding incentives, guiding universities to a large scale deployment of continuing education.

Ways forward can be:

- Develop a national and European policy framework and strategies for continuing education/ continuous professional development
- Organize a dialogue with the HEI's, EUA, EURASHE, ENQA, employers and employees on continuous education.
- Align and engage the member states on continuous education in order to respond to the needs of society.
- Make SLPs and continuous education/CPD an important part of the Bologna process and hence of the BFUG agenda.
- Integrate the area of continuing education / continuing professional development in the Bologna process

9.3 Lack of expertise in online education

SLPs require innovative approaches to curriculum and course design, involving new pedagogies and appropriate technologies for a distributed delivery. Online course design methods are not enough applied in today's higher education practice.

Ways forward at the institutional level are:

- Adopt a learning environment with suitable technologies for continuous education / CPD and university-business cooperation. Organize technology support for teaching staff.

- Provide continuous professional development of staff.

- Create course teams and subject area groups with different expertise available in teaching and learning departments, educational technology departments and extension structures. This will generate better quality as the institution is no longer dependent on one instructor.

- Guide and support teachers through the course design process

- Share patterns of good practices on flexible and scalable SLPs (curriculum development, course design and new pedagogies for SLPs).

9.4 Additional workload for teachers

Following the experience of teaching staff, the design and development of courses might require additional workload.

Ways forward at the institutional level are:

- Look to teaching staff workload in a long term perspective: efforts in the design phase are compensated in the implementation phase and in the steady state of course delivery
- Divide the work in course teams: modules and units are developed by several teaching staff under the leadership of a course team leader
- Stimulate teaching staff to develop innovative continuing education courses with an extra fee or incentive per unit/ module and by offering extra support for teaching or research
- Use tender mechanisms to support departments and faculties
- Recognize staff through career planning mechanisms
- Share course material already available in open education resources and MOOCs
- Develop continuous education in cooperation with other universities (national, international)

9.5 Recognition

People at work should have the opportunity to update their knowledge during their career or to prepare themselves for a career switch. Because of time constraints, they typically look for short learning programmes (SLPs) for continuous professional development, in order to obtain an award, a certificate or a diploma at undergraduate and postgraduate qualification levels (EFQ 4 to 8: foundation, bachelor, master and doctoral level). At a later stage, they preferably should be able to valorise credits obtained by SLP modules and courses as building blocks in broader degree programmes.

If programs are not recognised appropriately, students might be afraid that it is not valuable or less valuable. Recognition should build trust both on the labour market and in academia.

Ways forward can be:

- Define ECTS points for courses in continuous education / continuous professional development
- Define awards in a coherent way and fitting in the European Qualification Framework (EFQ). SLPs contribute to the discussion on a renewed EQF, which is announced in the New Skills Agenda, including the integration of informal and non-formal learning (eg MOOCs).
- SLPs can link with all levels of the EQF-HE, from the foundation to the postgraduate level.
- Develop European guidelines for recognizing continuous education /continuous professional development, e.g. harmonizing names given to awards
- Develop institutional policies to recognize awards as building blocks for degree programmes
- Create an effective system against diploma mills

9.6 Accreditation

Short learning programmes should also meet short and medium term needs for innovation in the economy or society. Accreditation rules might slow down this process.

Ways forward can be:

- Avoid a priori accreditation rules for the area of continuing education / continuing professional development programmes

- Apply institutional accreditation rules for the area of continuing education / continuing professional development. Trust the institution and its quality assurance processes. No individual accreditation of SLPs.

9.7 Clear business models

As current initiatives for continuing education are too small and not accessible enough for the majority of learners, higher education institutions and governments have to develop policies to make this a substantial area of provision, next to degree education and open education, responding to the needs of large numbers of learners for continuous education and continuous professional development (CE/CPD) and innovation in enterprises. Generally, universities miss the right business models to develop continuing education/continuing professional development at scale.

From the "clients" point of view, flexible online/blended SLPs fit with the time constraints and the time horizon of learners and are also scalable for larger groups of students.

Ways forward can be:

- Provide some seed money for the initial investment
- Look to proven business models in research and innovation: fees are asked and the revenues are led directly to the organizing department
- Lead revenues to the departments with a small overhead only for the services of the institution
- Develop a university extension structure

9.8 Diversity in offerings

The area of continuing education/continuing professional development has to meet a diversity of needs in the economy and society and also a diversity of students with different time horizons and in different professional or personal situations. Offerings of universities should be as much as possible demand-driven, based on evidence about the needs and about characteristics of the learners. Education and training should be flexible and scalable to reach-out to learners where they are across a country and when learning time is available to them. For specialized subjects, courses should be available across countries. Online solutions create this possibility (see Delft, Edinburgh, the University of London, the Open University).

Ways forward can be:

- Make clear course descriptions: clear learning objectives and descriptions, workload per week, number of weeks, course format
- Make clear descriptions of qualifications awarded and the relevance for further studies and career development, respecting the size and the level of the course qualification level
- Organize a dialogue with businesses and social partners on needs in the economy and on qualifications
- Arrange specific SLP provisions for disadvantaged groups (refugees, migrants)
- A free course or a MOOC as a starter of SLP (self-assessment for learners, match between needs/interest and content of the course) to motivate learners

- Take into account customer reviews /company recommendations

9.9 Finding SLPs / How to market?

Reaching-out to learners for SLP's is a challenge. As a consequence, this will need external communication and recruitment to which universities are not used.

Ways forward can be:

- Collaborate with civil society organizations and social partners to disseminate knowledge on SLP's and SLP qualifications, including their relevance for further studies and career development

- Set up a European portal for online SLPs, stimulating European-wide delivery

- Use national ministries (education and training, social affairs economic affairs, culture,…) to promote SLPs

- Collaborate with companies and sectors

- Use alumni and knowledge networks

- Universities extend their provisions via an extension structure and recruitment policy (country-wide, European-wide)

9.10 Making the connection with the field

Blended/online SLPs are in particular suitable for teaching large numbers of students, combining work and study, especially when they are conceived for flexible and independent learning. They fit with the time constraints and the time horizon of learners: learners can learn where and when they want, at home or in a company, dependent of their situation. With ICT-based modes of teaching and learning, the flexibility of SLPs will increase as face to face activities on campus are restricted.

Nevertheless, it is a hard to make a good course as needs of companies are very diverse.

Ways forward can be:

- anticipate on needs and careers of tomorrow, respond to mismatches and gaps in knowledge/skills and needs for personal development.

- Use subject matter experts from companies

- Involve your alumni

- Connect with branch organisations

10.   ENQA Working Group on quality assurance of e-learning

With regard to the quality assurance of blended and online education, a lot of work is already done by the ENQA Working Group e-Learning. This was reported by its chair, Esther Huertas Hidalgo (AQU, Catalunia, ENQA).

The ENQA Working Group is consisting of experts of different quality assurance agencies. Objectives are: creating an inventory of sources on quality assurance and e-learning; agreeing on a definition of e-learning; agreeing on recommendations on quality assurance and higher education institutions. It concerns all types of higher education, all types of e-learning and all types of quality assurance activities (audits, program accreditation, institutional assessment,…).

A state of the art of the activities of the work and the proposals of the group was given by its chairperson.

From the point of view of the working group, all standards of the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) are fully applicable to e-learning provisions.

With regard to *internal quality assurance*, Standard 1.1 should include specify that e-learning has a place in the institutional policy and that pedagogical models and innovation are part of the institutional strategy as well. Institutional policies and support should cover all elements to develop e-learning: course design; teaching and learning processes; course structure; student support; staff support; technologies; student assessment and authentication.

In Standard 1.3 student-centred learning, teaching ad assessment should include a specification with regard to e-learning course design and e-assessment.

In Standard 1.4 on recognition and certification, the same level of recognition should be guaranteed for e-learning as for face to face programmes. Fraud and diploma mills must be avoided.

In Standard 1.5, it should be assumed that teaching for e-learning presents a different staff structure: authors, tutors, instructors, managers. Staff should have the right qualifications, knowledge and skills. A support system for staff should be in place.

Standard 1.6 should require student support in order to avoid drop-out.

With regard to external quality assurance, Standard 2.2 should allow and promote flexible processes to include new modes of teaching and learning (innovation) as well as specific criteria and indicators.

For Standard 2.4 experts with experience in e-learning should be adopted in the peer review expert panels.

The conclusions of ENQA`s working group should be discussed by different stakeholders.

11. Quality Assurance of blended and online education: current practices (results of the questionnaire)

The outline of the ENQA working group was followed by a discussion on quality assurance of blended and online education based on the questionnaires submitted by the participants. Part of this was a report on good practices.

Main issues related to blended degree education identified in the questionnaires and the discussion can be summarized as follows:

- Leadership: leadership matters to make an institution innovative and to implement blended and online education and provisions for continuous education

- Professional development of staff. This should be part of support structure of an institution. Peer groups and network events also promote a professional approach to blended and online education. An institute for digital education can organise staff training.

- Professional infrastructure and support for the creation of audio-visual material. Media specialists should be available.
- Blended and online should be interactive using discussion groups, collaborative learning, project work, etc. The appropriate software and the pedagogies are often not available for this.
- There are misconceptions and hidden theories on blended and online learning which hinder proper course design
- Small number of faculty members, small numbers of administrative personnel to support the increase of programmes and increased number of students
- There is a need to modernize current programmes of studies
- A hub for innovation with patterns of good practices and international initiatives can help as well as the availability of national expertise. In many countries, this expertise is available in specialized agencies and in the open universities and their research and development institutes

With regard to the extension of short learning programmes, issues are:

- Ability of universities to quickly answer to the emerging labour market needs with effective programmes. Decision processes are often inflexible and are prohibitive for rapid responses to externalities
- Curriculum design for flexible programmes, adapted to the target groups are needed Capacity of teachers and other staff
- New types of programmes needed with employment prospects in mind

Main issues for QA agencies identified in the questionnaires are:

- A common approach of quality assurance agencies is needed so that the outcomes of the assessment are the same (reliability). This requires specific criteria/indicators or at least guidelines or specific questions for assessment, e.g. institutional strategies and planning for blended and online learning, on line course design, technology infrastructure and resources (researched as fit for purpose), staff support and student support.
- At the other hand, some quality indicators are not relevant when blended or online learning is practiced, e.g. physical rooms, to a certain extent the student/staff ratio.
- National agencies should seek for a cross-institutional consistent approach backed by governance , in collaboration with stakeholders. This can lead to additional guidelines for blended and online education. Some national agencies have already worked on this (UK, Ireland, Cyprus, Portugal, etc.)
- Institutional approval processes for programme design and quality assurance should be in place
- Student support in blended and online education is an important issue as well as collaborative learning.
- The management of assessment and authenticity is still an issue, although EU projects are preparing solutions (TESLA project)

- Quality systems for blended and online learning are already developed (e.g. E-xcellence, openly available). Institutions should choose the best system.

- The exchange of good practice would support institutions and agencies

- Quality assurance culture has to be built from the foundation of the Institution.

12.   Lessons learnt from 10 years E-xcellence and discussion

After setting the challenges, the PLA looked into lessons learnt out of practice with the E-xcellence instrument and possible consequences for quality assurance. A lively discussion was led by Jon Rosewell.

In quality assurance, different kinds of tensions are reported:

- The tension between high level standards that are independent of teaching mode (face to face, blended, online,…) and detailed indicators for blended and online teaching and learning
- The tension between external (national/international) quality assurance and internal quality assurance
- The tension between a compliance with standards/criteria (retrospective) and the enhancement of processes (prospective)
- The tension between content (components and product) and process and context

The E-xcellence instrument (http://e-xcellencelabel.eadtu.eu) is developed for quality assurance of blended and online education and consists of benchmarks related to 1. Strategic management (5 benchmarks), 2. Curriculum design (4 benchmarks) 3. Course design (9 benchmarks) 4. Course delivery (6 benchmarks) 5. Staff support (6 benchmarks) 6. Student support (5 benchmarks).

Those benchmarks are statements of best practice. In E-xcellence, benchmarking is used as a quality enhancement tool. The procedure identifies weaknesses and strengths by collecting evidence and it delivers an action plan for improvement to the institution. The instrument and the manual are openly available and published under Creative Commons licensing.

The Quickscan can be used as an informal self-assessment, identifying 'hot' and 'cold' spots. In the full internal self-assessment procedure, stakeholders collect evidence and prepare a roadmap of actions to be integrated with internal institutional processes. The self-assessment and the external review can be integrated in formal processes of quality assurance agencies. External agencies can also embed selected benchmarks in the formal process.

Based on the experience with the instrument, emerging issues were identified such as the workload management (of staff), implementing an institutional e-learning strategy, organizing academic communities and the use of social media. Non-issues were: student support generally and the reliability / performance of VLEs.

What role could quality assurance agencies play in relation to quality assurance in e-learning? They should regard e-learning as an indispensable element of modern education, create an independent assessment of e-learning/on-line programs and prepare recommendations in quality assurance and e-learning. They should both play a constructive and an accreditive role in the development of a

methodology to assess quality in e- learning and organize workshops on quality assurance benchmarks.

13. Quality assurance of online and blended education: challenges and ways forward

The major challenge with regard to quality assurance of higher education in the future is to find the right balance between the assessment of high quality learning outcomes, the quality of the learning processes leading to those higher quality learning outcomes and the quality of institutional interventions leading to continuous improvement and innovation of the institution. This implies as well making quality criteria supportive for blended and online programs.

Ways forward can be:

- A template / framework with specific criteria and indicators/ guidelines for blended and online education, aligned to the recommendations of the ENQA Working Group, which is currently doing its work
- Providing guidance (standards & guidelines) to institutions which want to set up blended or online courses
- Sharing good practices (agencies supporting agencies)
- Developing criteria for assessing innovation (level of innovation) by adopting a maturity model for blended education
- Inviting at least one member on the review panel with experience in blended and online / distance learning. Panel members should have the competence to assess blended and online teaching and learning and take into account (listening to) the feedback of all stakeholders (learners, teachers, institutional leaders).
- Distinguishing blended and online teaching and learning from misconceptions
- Start from learning outcomes and assess if the teaching mode (any, incl. blended) is appropriate to achieve that outcome
- Assess also elements which are not clear or easy to measure
- Evaluate teacher competences for blended and online teaching and learning
- Provide a (international) database of experts and eventually look for reviewers / evaluators abroad
- Create an open mind to new ideas / new methods / new pedagogies

14. PLA outcomes

The PLA reached the following outcomes:

14.1 An enhanced common understanding blended and online education

- New, digital modes of teaching and learning will affect higher education practice and policies and strategies in higher education
  - Innovating degree education, facing higher student numbers and a lower staff/student ratios, extending the learning environment and intensifying education

- Upscaling continuing education for career development (CPD) and for personal development, responding to urgent needs in the economy and in society
  - MOOCs, transferring knowledge and skills to all and creating a culture of lifelong learning
- *Blended degree programs* will be standard offerings in degree education in the future. Blended education can be defined as learning that happens in an instructional context which is characterized by a deliberate combination of online and classroom-based interventions to instigate and support learning. The goals of blended learning are: course design according to more effective pedagogies; an increased convenience and access for the learners; and an increased cost-effectiveness
- The role of *continuing education and short learning programs* in higher education will increase to numbers exceeding those of degree education, due to the needs in society. They will be organized at all levels: preparation courses, foundation level, post-bachelor and post-master level and lead to a variety of qualifications: awards, certificates, diplomas, to be fit into the European Qualification Framework. Reasons to provide these SLPs online are related to upscaling participation, being flexible for students at work and broadening the outreach across a country or internationally. Currently, most existing initiatives for continuous education are too small, not scalable and not flexible to face the needs of the economy and of society at large. Universities need an extension structure to organize this area
- *MOOCs* are freely accessible courses that educate many in a flexible way, that meet the needs of today's learners for an increasingly complex world. Investments in and the uptake of MOOCs are increasing significantly worldwide. MOOCs are here to stay and they are becoming an increasingly important part of higher education systems.
- These developments should be stimulated and activated by national governments as part of the *Bologna Process* in order to accelerate strategic efforts and developments in all European countries in a lifelong learning perspective. Next to initial education (bachelor-master), short learning programs at all higher education qualification levels should be part of the European Higher Education Area. Member states have to be aligned and engaged in order to respond to the needs of society and to harmonize provisions and qualifications.

14.2 A dialogue on innovation and quality assurance between institutions, quality assurance agencies and governments

A dialogue between main stakeholders on digital modes of teaching and learning and the development of blended degree education and on online continuous education should be organized in order to support these developments and to promote appropriate quality assurance policies

- *Institutions:* developing and implementing policies and strategies for digital education in blended degree and extended continuing education provisions, an internal quality framework with a maturity model for online/blended learning and for continuing and open education
- *Quality assurance agencies*: adapting and fine-tuning criteria/indicators and presenting guidelines for innovation and digital modes of teaching and learning, and sharing good practices of internal and external quality assurance

- *Governments:* developing drivers for innovation and quality and reviewing regulatory frameworks and practices for quality assurance and accreditation in higher education encouraging and accelerating innovation. A vision for change should be expressed through national strategies.

This dialogue should lead to concerted actions towards innovation and quality

14.3 Key elements that should be moved forward in order to strengthen innovation and the dialogue between governments, QA-agencies and universities in this field

Key elements to move forward innovation and the dialogue:

- *Institutions:* leadership to be continuously innovative, continuous professional development of staff, technology and staff support, collaboration within the institution (teams and support structures), institutional evaluation and research, university extension schemes for extending continuing education to a large scale;
- *Quality assurance agencies*: sharing good practices between agencies; seeking for a cross-institutional consistent approach backed by stakeholders; evaluating institutions on their active support of innovation and its impact on the quality of teaching and learning; developing a consistent approach on criteria and guidelines for blended and online education;
- *Governments:* governmental strategies and visions, funding schemes, large scale continuing education as an area of provision next to degree education

14.4 Identifying the expertise needed and ways of sharing at European level

- *Institutions:* teaching and learning departments, university extension structures with expertise on educational/pedagogical, technological, business models
- *Quality assurance agencies:* in-house expertise on recognizing and supporting digital modes of teaching and learning; expertise also to be reflected in review panels; expertise in blended degree education and online continuous education
- *Governments:* support structure/agency for online and blended education

14.5 Identifying ways forward and lower thresholds in innovating education

- *Institutions*: Governmental strategies and frameworks; European networking and collaboration; collaboration with quality agencies
- *Quality assurance agencies:* European networking and sharing good practices through ENQA; support of institutions; developing recommendations, guidelines and policies for institutions
- *Governments*: creating a favourable framework for blended degree education and continuing education, including equal funding parameters for traditional and online/distance students; an equal funding statute for full-time and part-time students; making structures for continuing education and degree education permeable and giving extra funding to institutions favouring students combining work an study and flexible study paths

14.6 identifying future innovative initiatives and projects related to the topic of the PLA.

- ENQA Working Group e-learning: 2016-2018
- EFFECT project, coord. EUA: 2016-2018
- EMBED project, coord. EADTU: 2017-2020
- E-SLP project starting, coord. EADTU: 2018-2021

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Agenda

Quality Assurance of blended and online Programmes

Dutch House of Provinces, 21-22 September 2017
Rue de Trèves 59, Brussels

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Day 1: 21 September 2017

13.00   **Registration**

13.45   **Welcome address**

   Anja Oskamp, President EADTU and Rector OUNL

   Esther Huertas Hidalgo (AQU Catalunya), Chair ENQA WG E-learning

   Noel Vercruysse, Policy Advisor Flemish Ministry of Education

   Vanessa Debiais-Sainton, Representative of the European   Commission/EACEA

14.15   **Introduction to the PLA and its objectives**

   George Ubachs, Managing Director EADTU

14.30   **Session 1**. **The changing pedagogical landscape in Europe. Latest developments in uptake of new modes of teaching**

-   State of play of on campus blended degree education, including two examples of good practice. *Stijn Van Laer, Centre for Instructional Psychology and Technology, KU Leuven*.

-   State of play of off campus online short learning programmes for continuing education and CPD, including two examples of good practice. *Anja Oskamp, President EADTU and Rector OUNL*

   Stakeholder reflections and discussion: panel EUA (Michael Gaebel), ESU (Adam Gajek), EADTU (Alejandro Tiana Ferrer), Government (Noel Vercruysse), European Commission (Vanessa Debiais-Sainton)

15.30   **Coffee break**

16.00 **Session on Quality Assurance of blended and online education: Roundtable country reports**

16.00 **2a   Presentation by ENQA WG E-learning on recommendations for the QA of e-learning** *Esther Huertas Hidalgo (AQU Catalunya), Chair ENQA WG E-learning*

16.30 **2b**.   **Quality Assurance of blended and online education: how is it currently done? Interactive interview of all participants and discussion on the   results of the questionnaire**

Jon Rosewell, Senior Lecturer Open University, UK

Esther Huertas Hidalgo (AQU Catalunya), Chair ENQA WG E-learning

Challenges and good practice on quality assurance of blended and online learning,

17.30 **Closing day 1**

19.00   **Dinner at Park Side Brasserie offered by the Government of Flanders**

Park Side Brasserie (http://restoparkside.be/en)
Blijde Inkomstlaan 24
1000 Brussel
Belgium

Day 2: 22 September 2017

09.00   Introduction second day

        George Ubachs, Managing Director EADTU

09.15   Session 3A. Parallel Thematic Sessions

Participants are divided into two parallel groups attending both thematic sessions that are facilitated by experts.

GROUP 1 – Plenary Room	**GROUP 2 – Glass Room**
Five main challenges for online SLPs and recommendations to the main stakeholders on how to address those challenges Expert moderator: Willem van Valkenburg	Five main challenges for blended education and recommendations to the main stakeholders on how to address those challenges Expert moderator: Stijn Van Laer

10.45   Coffee break

11.15   Session 3B. Parallel Thematic Sessions

Participants are divided into two parallel groups attending both thematic sessions that are facilitated by experts:

GROUP 1 – Plenary Room	**GROUP 2 – Glass Room**
Five main challenges for blended education and recommendations to the main stakeholders on how to address those challenges Expert moderator: Jukka Lerkkanen	Five main challenges for online SLPs and recommendations to the main stakeholders on how to address those challenges Expert moderator: Jeroen Winkels

12.45   Lunch

13.45   Feedback and discussion between the groups to draw overall conclusions of the working groups

Rapporteurs of the two working groups; presentation by the 4 moderators

14.15   **Session 4. Structured discussion on ways to address QA of blended and online education: respective opportunities and challenges**

Chairs: *Jon Rosewell, Senior Lecturer Open University, UK*

World café format discussion

15.15   **Coffee break**

15.30 **Session 5. European level approach for QA of online education**

E-xcellence approach; lessons learned

Jon Rosewell, Senior Lecturer Open University, UK
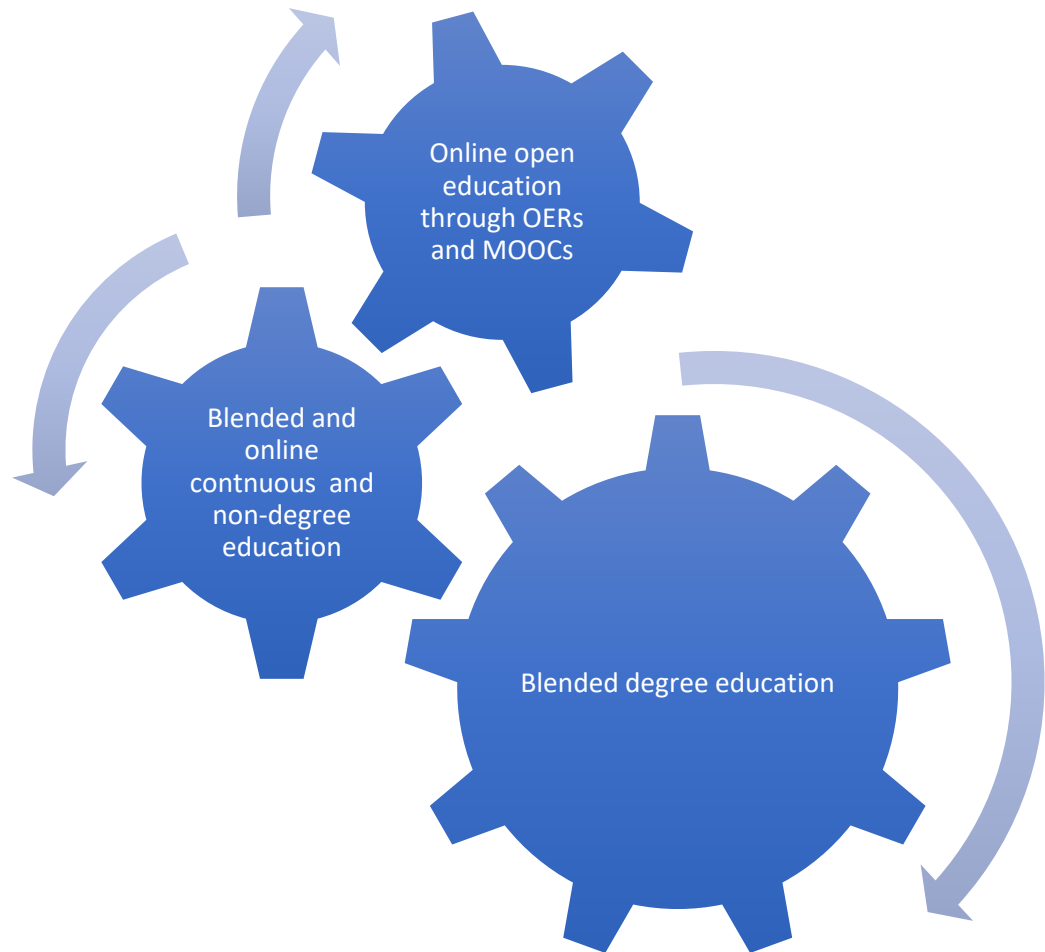

16.00 **Closing remarks and next steps**

Anja Oskamp, President EADTU and Rector OUNL

Esther Huertas Hidalgo (AQU Catalunya), Chair ENQA WG E-learning
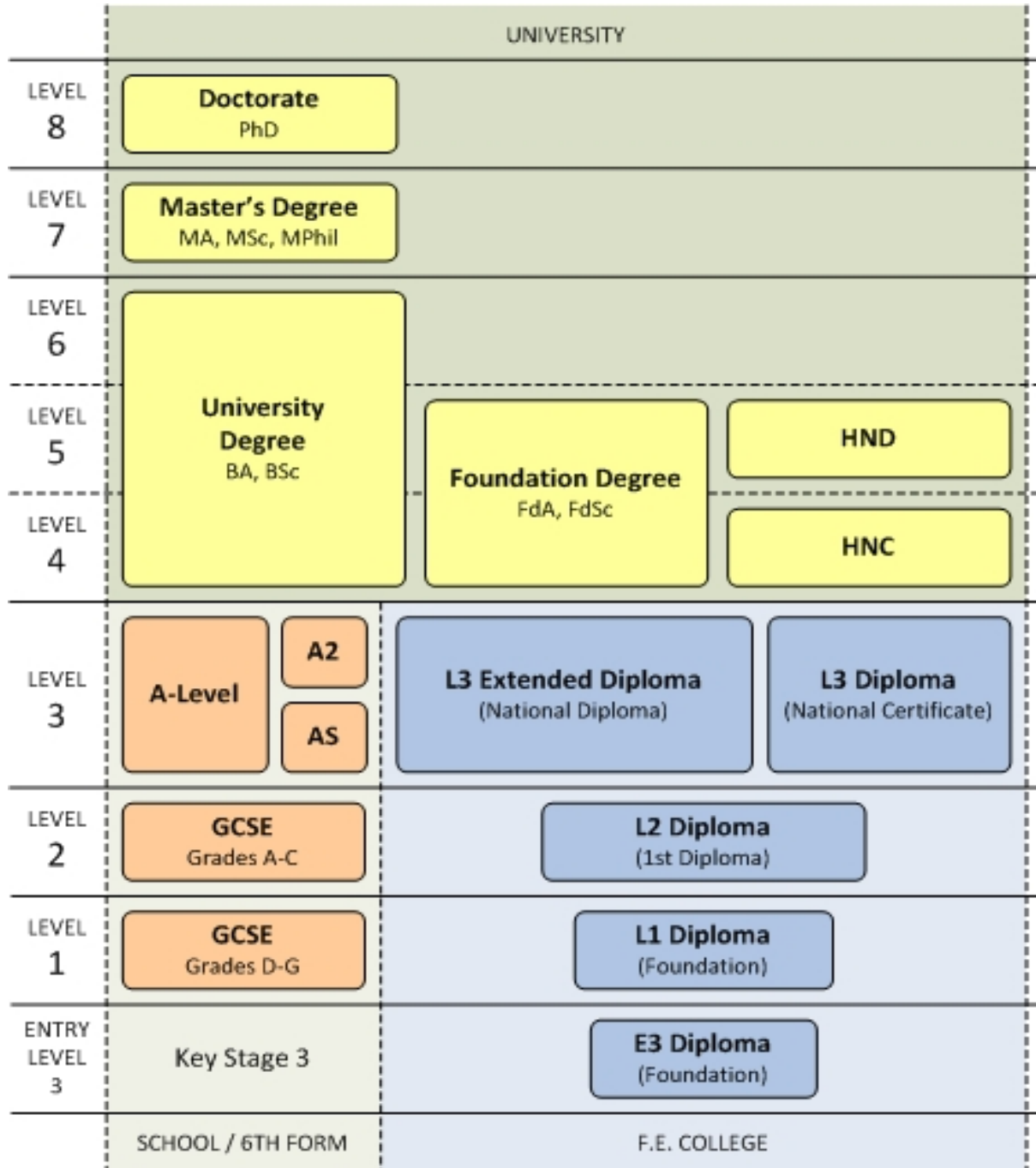
Adam Gajek, Vice President of ESU

ANNEX 2 – Three emerging areas of provision in higher education

Online open education through OERs and MOOCs

Blended and online contnuous and non-degree education

Blended degree education

ANNEX 3 – Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF)

The new Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) in the UK provides a place for short programmes of different sizes at the respective qualification levels. It corresponds with the European Qualification Framework.

	UNIVERSITY		
LEVEL 8	**Doctorate** PhD		
LEVEL 7	**Master's Degree** MA, MSc, MPhil		
LEVEL 6	**University Degree** BA, BSc		
LEVEL 5		**Foundation Degree** FdA, FdSc	**HND**
LEVEL 4			**HNC**
LEVEL 3	**A-Level** / **A2** / **AS**	**L3 Extended Diploma** (National Diploma)	**L3 Diploma** (National Certificate)
LEVEL 2	**GCSE** Grades A-C	**L2 Diploma** (1st Diploma)	
LEVEL 1	**GCSE** Grades D-G	**L1 Diploma** (Foundation)	
ENTRY LEVEL 3	Key Stage 3	**E3 Diploma** (Foundation)	
	SCHOOL / 6TH FORM	F.E. COLLEGE	

ANNEX 4 – Examples of Short Learning programmes (SLPs)

Current practice on SLPs

Most European universities organise a range of certified continuing education or professional development programmes across all faculties. They can be academically or professionally oriented. Those programmes are mainly face to face, on a fixed day (a Friday, a Saturday). Many of them are short higher education programmes or short learning programmes. They reach small numbers of students as they are often not flexible enough to be attended by students at work. Nevertheless, many universities make special arrangements for working students in evening and week-end classes.

Not many universities organise *online s*hort learning programmes. The reason to provided them are related to upscaling participation, to be flexible for students at work and to broaden the outreach of the course across a country or even internationally. We find examples of online short learning programmes in traditional and in open universities.

SLP's are organised at all levels: preparation courses, foundation level, post-bachelor level, post-master level. They lead to a variety of qualifications: awards, certificates, post-graduate certificates, diplomas. ECTS is mostly used, but also CEU, especially in courses where only attendance is registered. Qualifications are not always defined according to the European Qualification Framework (EFQ) which is hindering transparency in this respect.

Many students for continuing education and continuous professional development are not degree-seeking, others are. Often, universities offer the possibility to students to chain modules and certificates in order to obtain a degree (bachelor, master).

Open universities from their origin organize flexible education for students at work. They have developed pedagogical and organizational approaches for reaching out to these students and they are used to large scale operations. Traditional universities are developing strategies for a systematic approach to continuing education involving flexible and therefore online solutions. Some are frontrunners in this respect. Organizationally, they need to build a kind of extension studies structure in order to be successful, as is done already by some European and by US universities (Stanford, Harvard, MIT).

Three areas of provision emerge in European and US universities: degree education as the backbone of a university; continuing education and continuous professional development, which probably will exceed the number of degree students; and open education which emerged mainly by the MOOC movement. Universities attempt policies and strategies to define their profile in these areas, which can be complementary to each other and to some extent interwoven.

In this annex, examples of good practice are shown from the University of Edinburgh, the Open University, the UOC of Catalunya and the University of Delft:

University of Edinburgh

Awards and study time on line postgraduate programmes

A full masters programme delivered online normally takes about three years. You should expect to work between 10-15 hours a week, with more time needed when assignments are due.

Our online learning programmes offer flexible exit routes, allowing you to shape your academic journey to suit your needs.

For example, if you enrol on a masters programme but decide not to complete the full three years, your completed credits can contribute towards an alternative postgraduate qualification.

Depending on your programme and on the number of credits completed, you may be able to gain the following awards:

- Postgraduate Professional Development (PgProfDev) after one years' study
- Postgraduate Certificate (PgCert) after one years' study
- Postgraduate Diploma (PgDip) after two years' study
- Masters degree (such as MSc, LLM) after three years' study

Our online programmes involve the same level of work overall as our on-campus programmes, and the qualification you get is of equal value.

Example 1

Climate Change Management (Online Distance Learning)
http://www.ed.ac.uk/studying/postgraduate/degrees/index.php?r=site/view&id=875

Example 2

Public Health (Online Distance Learning)
http://www.ed.ac.uk/studying/postgraduate/degrees/index.php?r=site/view&id=886
The Open University

We are the acknowledged leaders in contemporary distance learning. You study part time, earning while you learn – at home, at work and on the move to suit the demands of your lifestyle and circumstances. You can access our world-class teaching materials at your desk and on the go. Our superb digital library is open 24 hours a day, and everything we teach is grounded in the research we're internationally famous for. You'll have a personal tutor to guide you in your learning, provide feedback on your written work, and deliver group tutorials (face-to-face or online). They'll support you throughout the course and you'll be able to stay in touch by phone or online.

The Open University, UK

Postgraduate diplomas

- 120 credits
- typically two years' part-time study

- Widely-recognised qualification.
- Equivalent to two thirds of a masters degree.
- Deepen your academic, professional and technical knowledge and skills.
- Boost your career or take it in a new direction.
- Just one more year of part-time study to complete a masters degree.

Postgraduate certificates

- 60 credits
- typically one year part-time study

- The first step on the way to a masters degree.
- A valuable qualification in its own right.
- Ideal for professional and career development.
- Enhance your academic, professional and technical knowledge and skills.
- Just two more years of part-time study to complete a masters degree.

Single modules

- 15, 30, 60 or 120 credits
- typically six to nine months' part-time study

- Self-contained unit of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Combine modules towards OU qualifications, or study individually for interest or professional development.
- Credit in an appropriate subject is widely recognised by many other universities.
- Level of difficulty graded as postgraduate (equivalent to FHEQ level 7/SCQF level 11).

Example 1 (diploma)

Postgraduate Diploma in Systems Thinking in Practice
http://www.open.ac.uk/postgraduate/qualifications/e28

Example 2 (certificate)

http://www.open.ac.uk/postgraduate/qualifications/k26

Postgraduate Certificate in Social and Psychological Inquiry

Example 3 (single module)

Introduction to corporate finance (module)
http://www.open.ac.uk/postgraduate/modules/b858

List of OUUK postgraduate diplomas, certificates and modules online

Postgraduate diplomas

Advanced Networking
Advancing Healthcare Practice
Business Administration
Computing
Development Management
Engineering
Environmental Management
Finance
Human Resource Management
Humanities
Integrated Practice in Childhood and Youth
Mathematics
Medicinal Chemistry
Mental Health Science
Online and Distance Education
Professional Studies in Education
Social Work
Space Science and Technology
Systems Thinking in Practice
Technology Management
Translation

Postgraduate certificates

Advancing Healthcare Practice
Business Administration
Computing
Conflict and Development
Development Management
Environmental Management
Finance
Human Resource Management
Human Rights and Development Management
Humanities
Integrated Practice in Childhood and Youth
Management
Mathematics
Online and Distance Education
Professional Studies in Education
Social and Psychological Inquiry
Space Science
Systems Thinking in Practice
Technology Management
Translation

Modules

Addressing inequality and difference in educational practice
60 credits
Advanced mathematical methods
30 credits
Advanced routing - CCNP 1
30 credits
Analytic number theory I
30 credits
Analytic number theory II
30 credits
Applied complex variables
30 credits
Applied linguistics and English language
60 credits
Approximation theory
30 credits

And many others…

Universitat Oberta de Catalunya (UOC)

The student is supported at all times by specialized faculty whose primary functions are to design, guide, drive and assess the entire educational process. There are three teaching profiles (professor, course instructor and tutor) who work jointly to assure quality in the learning process.

The professor designs the course, assures its quality and coordinates the course instructors.

The course instructor guides and assesses the students' learning process within the framework of a particular course.

The tutor guides the student in choosing a personalized academic pathway at the UOC.

The UOC's Virtual Campus is the environment where all these elements converge and become interrelated. The life of the whole university community takes place on the Campus, comprising students, professors, researchers, course instructors, tutors and administrative staff. Through the Campus, the student has access to the virtual classrooms, which are the learning spaces where the teaching staff, fellow students, activities, content and tools for learning can be found.

Example 1

Food Security Programme Management

http://studies.uoc.edu/en/postgraduate-courses/health-sciences/food-security-programme-management

Example 2

Language learning and technology
http://studies.uoc.edu/en/postgraduate-courses/e-learning/language-learning-technology

Delft University of Technology

Why Choose TU Delft Online Learning?

- Course work & interactions are 100% online.
- Study at the time and place that suits you.
- 24/7 access to course material.
- Learn from world-class experts in their field.

Example 1

Introduction to Wind Turbines: Physics and Technology

https://online-learning.tudelft.nl/courses/introduction-to-wind-turbines-physics-and-technology/

Example 2

Advanced Leadership for Engineers: Leading Teams, Organizations and Networks

https://online-learning.tudelft.nl/courses/advanced-leadership-for-engineers/

ANNEX 5 – References

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