



## Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

### Between the European open and distance teaching universities on Short Learning Programmes

Considering the mission of open and distance teaching universities and the conclusions of the Rectors' and Board Meetings In Krakow (2014) and Hagen (2015), taking into account discussions/deliberations with the European Commission and stakeholders of higher education on the EADTU Brussels Summit (2015), regarding the study on behalf of the European Commission on the Changing Pedagogical Landscape in European Higher Education (2015), supporting the Modernization Agenda for Higher Education of the European Commission, especially with regard to education for innovation,

the European open and distance teaching universities, associated in EADTU, sign this Memorandum of Understanding on Short Learning Programs (SLP's) as a framework to:

- promote SLP's in their institutional provisions as a flexible tool for continuous professional development and better access to degree education
- recognize mutually modules and courses belonging to these programs
- develop joint SLP's with related mobility schemes.

#### Need

1. SLP's respond to the needs for flexible higher education in Europe, especially with regard to continuous professional development. Flexible education is the only way forward to meet sustainably the EU 2020 objectives and to improve skills and employability all over Europe.
2. SLP's also respond to the demand of large categories of 25+ students for a short study period in order to obtain an award, a certificate or a diploma at diversified qualification levels (EQF from 4 to 8: foundation, bachelor, master and doctoral level).
3. After studying a SLP, students should have the possibility to integrate credits obtained by SLP modules and courses as building blocks in broader degree programs. SLP's can also form a step-up to degree programs. Special SLP's, introducing disadvantaged groups (migrant students, refugees, etc.) to degree studies, can be provided
4. To respond effectively to the diverse demand in society, European open and distance teaching universities will provide national SLP's. Also, they will collaborate to develop a European-wide offer of SLP's. The offer of SLP's will be flexibly accessible from anywhere in Europe.

#### Objectives

5. Hence, the objectives of this Memorandum are:
  - to provide a common framework for the development of SLP's at European open and distance teaching universities;

- to promote the development of flexible SLP's as a response to the diversity of needs in society and as an opportunity for students to study fit to their profile and to the study-time available to them;
- to activate collaboration and mobility between European open and distance teaching universities in order to enrich the content of SLP's, to improve their educational quality and to raise their European outreach, scale and cost-effectiveness.

## Structure of SLP's

6. European open and distance teaching universities will provide SLP's of different sizes (number of ECTS points) and at different qualification levels in compliance with the European Qualification Framework and in alignment with the respective national Qualification Frameworks (see example in annex).
7. In this framework, every unit has a credit value and a qualification or difficulty level (from 4 to 8: foundation, bachelor, master and doctoral level).
8. The title of each qualification within this framework contains details of the size (award/certificate/diploma), level of difficulty (eg. level 4 to level 8) and general content of the qualification.
9. Where possible and relevant, the SLP will be elaborated as a stepping stone towards a full degree.

## Collaboration

10. In order to better respond to the needs of students and in society, open and distance teaching universities will collaborate in order to develop gradually a European offer of SLP's. Collaborations between two of more open and distance universities with regard to SLP's can aim at:
  - the mutual recognition of modules or courses, leading to exemptions when students register for SLP's and subsequently degree programmes at one of the collaborating universities;
  - the development of a joint SLP-programme with a joint award, certificate or diploma with integrated mobility between partner universities. Ultimately, SLP's can also be (alternative) tracks in joint bachelor or master programmes. For collaborative programmes, a leading university should coordinate a partnership or consortium of universities.
11. SLP's can also contain work-based learning or internships involving university-business collaboration.

The academic recognition of SLP's is a decision of the programme management or the examination committee for an academic programme. This recognition will be institutionalised by the respective vice-chancellors/rectors through a letter of intent towards the coordinator/coordinating institution.
12. In order to match SLP's to the needs in society, collaboration with European stakeholders of employers and employees is sought to promote the relevance, the delivery and uptake of SLP's.
13. Eventually, the development of SLP's can be funded by European or national programmes. Subsequently, sustainable business models have to be deployed.

## Innovation

14. SLP's can be organised as international and collaborative experimental spaces, where open and distance teaching universities valorise their excellence in teaching and learning in an international, collaborative context. Participating universities will all benefit from learning from each other and strengthen their visibility, reputation and branding in the entire sector of higher education.



In this experimentation space, European open and distance teaching universities will also capitalize on their experience with regard to new pedagogies like European virtual seminars, discussion fora, learning communities, think tanks and integrated virtual mobility.

### **MOOCs, badges and micro-credentials**

15. In the framework of SLP's, open and distance teaching universities will develop best practice on the assessment and recognition of MOOCs, generally counting far less workload, e.g. 6 weeks x 5 hours= 30hrs or 1 ECTS point. Recognition at different levels will be envisaged.
16. The same will be done for the recognition of open educational resources (eg the OUUK badged open courses system or BOCs for OpenLearn), or other badges and micro-credentials for the recognition of specific skills or learning experiences.

### **EADTU support**

17. The EADTU Secretariat will facilitate processes in the development of collaborative SLP's between open and distance teaching universities. SLP leaders take contact with the secretariat in order to share experience and expertise concerning the development of international collaborative programmes such as the composition and management of partnerships; international course development; the organisation of integrated online mobility; collaboration with the professional sector; the recognition of courses and programmes; student applications and admissions; joint examination methods and grade transfer mechanisms; students' participation costs; programme sustainability and business models; the promotion, visibility and attractiveness of the SLP; student services; language policy; and internal and eventual external quality assurance.

### **Coordination**

Each open and distance teaching university appoints a vice-rector for the coordination and implementation of this Memorandum of Understanding. At this level, all policy and strategy issues on SLP's will be discussed, such as the needs for SLP's in particular areas or for specific target groups, the of national and international SLP's in the membership, the mutual recognition of SLP's and course units in degree programmes and the development of collaborative SLP's.

18. An inventory of national SLP's will be published on the EADTU website for promotion.

### **Evaluation**

The activities within Memorandum of Understanding will be evaluated in December 2016 and subsequently every two years.



## Signatures

....., The Open University (OUUK), UK  
Rector Peter Horrocks

....., Open Universiteit (OUNL), the Netherlands  
Rector Anja Oskamp

....., Universidad Nacional de Educacion a Distancia (UNED), Spain  
Rector Alejandro Tiana Ferrer

....., FernUniversität in Hagen (FernUni), Germany  
Rector Ada Pellert

....., Universitat Oberta de Catalunya (UOC), Spain  
Rector Josep A. Planell Estany

....., Universidade Aberta (UAb), Portugal  
Rector Paulo Dias

....., Universita Telematica Internazionale UNINETTUNO  
Rector Maria Amata Garito (UNINETTUNO), Italy

....., Hellenic Open University (HOU), Greece  
Rector Vasilis Kardadis

....., Open University of Cyprus (OUC), Cyprus  
Rector Constantinos Christou

....., Anadolu University, Turkey  
Rector Naci Gündogan

....., The Open University of Israel  
Rector Aviad Heifetz

....., Istanbul University, Istanbul  
Rector Mahmut Ak

## Annex 1 – European and international qualification frameworks

The awards for SLP's should correspond with the European Qualification Framework (EQF), which is jointly developed and practiced by the Bologna countries<sup>1</sup>. EQF is a meta-framework, facilitating comparisons between national qualification frameworks. It consists of 8 qualifications levels. Qualification systems might (slightly) differ from each other.

### Example

In the new UK Qualification and Credit framework, short learning programs (SLP's) can have three different sizes of qualifications (where one UK credit represents 10 hours of learning time; one ECTS point represents about 25-30 hours of learning time):

- awards (1 to 12 UK credits; 0,5 ECTS to 5 ECTS)
- certificates (13 to 36 UK credits; 6 to 14 ECTS)
- diplomas (37 UK credits or more; 15 ECTS or more)

In this framework, every unit has a credit value and a qualification or difficulty level (from 4 to 8: foundation, bachelor, master and doctoral level).

The title of each qualification within this framework contains details of the size (award/certificate/diploma), level of difficulty (level 4 to level 8) and general content of the qualification.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/ploteus/sites/eac-efq/files/leaflet\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/ploteus/sites/eac-efq/files/leaflet_en.pdf)

The new Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) in the UK (2011, see table 1<sup>2</sup>) provides a place for short programmes of different sizes at the respective qualification levels.

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

<sup>2</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Qualifications\\_and\\_Credit\\_Framework](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Qualifications_and_Credit_Framework)

## **Annex 2- Examples of good practice in collaborative course development and mobility schemes**

The Lech-e project (coordination UKOU)

<http://www.eadtu.eu/home/policy-areas/open-education-and-moocs/publications/185-leche-project-summary>

<http://www.leche.open.ac.uk/>

EDEL-Net co-operation between law faculties (coordination FernUniversität)

<https://www.fernuni-hagen.de/universitaet/aktuelles/2015/11/am-23-edelnet.shtml>

Networked curricula and Virtual mobility project (NetCu) (coordination EADTU)

(<http://www.projects.eadtu.eu/netcu>)

SLP in distance education (UNED, Universidade Aberta, Uninettuno)

The European Virtual Seminar for Sustainable Development

<https://www.ou.nl/eCache/DEF/1/23/463.html>