



QUALITY ASSURANCE OF PROJECT OUTPUTS

REPORT NO 1

E+ NURSLING –

National Qualification Frameworks: Guidelines for Development and Recognition of Qualifications

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CONTENT

1. ABOUT THE PROJECT.....	2
2. ABOUT QUALITY ASSURANCE.....	3
3. QUALITY ASSURANCE MEASURES AND CONCLUSIONS.....	4
4. OUTLOOK	9



1. ABOUT THE PROJECT

The project aims to establish the National Committee on Qualification Frameworks in Uzbekistan, together with the national Ministry of Education, and to improve national General Regulations concerning education standards in particular fields, on the basis of qualification framework ideas, Bologna principles and the EU universities' experience and to introduce new national standards on informatics in Uzbekistan.

This will contribute to the wider objective to bring higher education in Uzbekistan closer towards the real needs of economy and society, to increase the number of graduates employed and the percentage of graduates' employment in the field related to qualification.

The project includes four work packages that are related to development of outputs:

1. Guidelines for development of Uzbek National Qualification Framework

- 1.1. Project Development Committee
- 1.2. Benchmarking report
- 1.3. Qualification Framework Committee
- 1.4. Liable staff retrained

2. Qualification Framework regulations

- 2.1. Draft for Guidelines for NQF
- 2.2. Feedback on the draft
- 2.3. Guidelines on NQF development approved by ministry
- 2.4. Regulations for Qualification Framework Committee
- 2.5. Equipment
- 2.6. NQF Committee

3. Database for NQF Committee

- 3.1. Design of necessary specifications by programmers
- 3.2. Trial version of the Database
- 3.3. Discussion of the Database

4. Sectoral Qualification Framework in IT

- 4.1. Learning outcomes based on Guideline's demands
- 4.2. Feedback of professional
- 4.3. Monitoring of practical use
- 4.4. Sectoral framework for IT

WUS Austria, together with the project coordinator, is responsible for coordinating the use of tools and procedures amongst the project partners to reach qualitative project outputs.



2. ABOUT QUALITY ASSURANCE

WUS Austria believes that quality management is based on four pillars: Quality management concerns all partners. Quality management does not happen automatically if you work well. Quality management is not about finding fault in our work. Proper documentation and sharing information is key to quality assurance.

The report follows the project through its first year of implementation until the project meeting in Trento in February 2017, where a session dedicated to quality assurance took place. The report explains the methods of data collection as and depicts challenges, lessons learnt, and recommendations.

The following activities and schedule for quality review are being carried out by WUS Austria with the targets as listed below¹ and based on the Quality Assurance Guidelines of the project:

Name of activity	Activity description	Time	Comments
QA Guidelines	The guidelines are a “living” document and can be updated if applicable throughout project implementation.	First version available by September 2016.	Was made available to project coordinator for feedback and publication in October 2016 (working version 0.1.)
QA Report No 1	A draft version should be available for feedback from the project coordinator in December 2016 and the final version including feedback will be available in January 2017. The results could be discussed at the third project meeting scheduled for February 2017.	January 2017	Submission of draft version delayed until the project meeting and QA session at the meeting in Trento in March 2017.
QA Report No 2	A draft version should be available for feedback from the project coordinator in December 2017 and the final version including feedback will be available in January 2018. The results could be discussed at the next project meeting after the results are available.	January 2018	

¹ The timeline may be revised if changes are necessary and in line with the overall work flow within the project.



QA Report 3 (final)	The final report will provide recommendations for safeguarding not only quality but also sustainability of project outcomes and outputs.	December 2018 (at the latest)	
Field visits	Field visits to partners in Uzbekistan to collect data for the assessment of quality of project outputs/outcomes.	2017 (timeframe to be agreed upon with partners from Uzbekistan at the end of 2016)	To be held back to back with next meeting in Uzbekistan.
Quality Assurance Session	Quality sessions should be carried out twice a year (e.g. at project meetings, or via skype with a smaller group of partners) with the aim to point out issues of concern and open questions that may be difficult to address by the project partners or the project coordinator.	2x in 2016, 2x in 2017 and 2x in 2018	First QA session held at Kick-off meeting in February 2016 in Uzbekistan (21-27 February 2016); second QA session held during summer university in July 2016 in Germany (11–22 July 2016); third QA session held at project meeting in March 2017 in Trento (14-18 March 2017).
Review of project outputs/deliverables	Is an ongoing activity which starts and ends with the project itself	January 2016 – December 2018	ongoing
External Evaluation			The modalities of external evaluation including responsibilities need to be agreed upon in 2017.

3. QUALITY ASSURANCE MEASURES AND CONCLUSIONS

Quality assurance guidelines

The principles of quality management as carried out by WUS Austria, and tailored to the project NURSLING, were presented together with the major components of the guidelines during the KoM in Uzbekistan in February 2016 (see also description of QA sessions below).

The Quality Assurance Guidelines were first drafted after the Kick-off Meeting in Uzbekistan in February 2016 and submitted to the project coordinator in October 2016, for feedback and publication.



Quality assurance sessions (sessions 1-3)

WUS Austria encouraged discussion of items related to quality assurance (challenges, shortcomings, open questions compromising the quality of deliverables etc.) via the quality assurance sessions. Quality assurance sessions took place during project meetings that included a majority of all partners. The role of WUS Austria is prepare, moderate and wrap-up the session together with the project coordinator, while partners are responsible to contribute to the session by preparing questions and solutions.

Session 1: The KoM in February 2016 presented the first opportunity for a QA session, with the aim to present the principles of quality management in the NURSLING project (such as joint responsibilities, ownership, adequate documentation etc.). Furthermore, during the project management session of the KoM, WUS Austria supported the project coordinator in discussing approaches, tasks and responsibilities in the project, with the view of feasibility and sustainability.

Notes from the meeting on project internal QA:

- We need to make sure we share the same objectives – it is important to understand what the UZ partners expect from the project and to make clear to all consortium partners which of the expectations are realistic and which are not.
- Make QA sessions at meetings (max 2/year) to investigate into project progress and partner satisfaction
- Do we need to establish a workplan for the project (milestones per year, schedule and suggested dates of meetings)? As a minimum we should have a workplan for the upcoming year so partners could plan their capacities and contributions.
- It seems import to report to UZ Ministry (higher education) on project progress

Notes from the meeting on items of general importance:

- Plan for communication: issue a newsletter (could be a simple pdf via email or just an email) in order to inform others about what is going on in the project
- Make conclusions as minutes for each meeting, we meet every six months, this could be instead of a newsletter. Conclusions/minutes could include a list of tasks with deadlines and responsible persons > send list of WP responsible
- To be provided to EU partners: Make sure we have the documents (legal requirements, decrees etc.) which the UZ partners follow within the frame of the project > UZ partner provide a set of most important legal docs for EU partners (3-5 most important docs, could be English or Russian, if in Russian provide summary in English)
- Have UZ partners present their view on expected project background and outputs: NQF in UZ and related decrees? Why do you think the project is important for UZ/the participating institutions? What do you expect as contribution from EU partners?



Session 2: The second (short) QA session took place during the summer university at University Koblenz-Landau in July 2016 during the project coordination meeting when WUS Austria supported discussion on project progress and challenges.

Notes from the meeting related to QA:

- The project coordinator demonstrates transparency and organizes the project meetings in a non-hierarchical manner which allows all partners to contribute. A majority of conversation is in Russian to allow the Uzbek partners to contribute, but is translated into English and vice versa at most times.
- Not much communication happens directly between project partners; EU partners do not seem to feel informed about project progress and project activities in Uzbekistan.
- Not all decisions from the KoM have been followed up (most importantly the issuing of a newsletter for publication of project relevant topics amongst target groups in Uzbekistan was not launched).

Session 3: The third QA session was hosted as part of the project meeting and trainings in Trento in March 2017. The session was more extensive (three hours) and included a presentation of the QA guidelines (in more detail) and an assessment (via group discussions) on project progress and challenges.

Objective of this session and structure of session: To help the consortium partners reflect on project implementation so far in order to understand how well the project is running, which achievements have already been made and where improvement is needed.

Group work: one group per partner

20 min discussion and analysis of the status quo of the project on the basis of the following topics:

- Organisational aspects
- NURSLING for your institution
- Objectives, outcomes and outputs (LFM)

Each group has to present the summary and the results of their group work.

Discussion of the presentations and follow-up measures.

Questions and results (includes contributions from 6 partners including coordinator):

Communication between your universities/institutions and the coordinator

There is good communication with/via the project coordinator (for most if not all partners), but not much if none at all between EU-Uzbek partners. In general, partners find that more communication is needed, especially between Uzbek and EU partners. Communication with Samarkand University was difficult as university management staff changed (rector and vice-rectors and head of international office), however the representative from Samarkand University thinks that communication will be better in the future; also the next meeting should take place in Samarkand). In general it was suggested that the country coordinator for



Uzbekistan could CC the EU partners into the communication with Uzbek partners, which on the other hand creates a problem with the languages of communication (Russian vs English).

Communication between partners

The level of communication of partners seems satisfactory; close connection between Uzbek partners; the national coordinator currently very busy, mainly communicating with Abdugapur and he is disseminating information within Uzbek partners; but as was pointed out before there is room for improvement in with communication with EU partners. One Uzbek partner reported about the project in the frame of the Erasmus + conference (8 members of this project from 3 universities every participating); the project coordinator emphasises the importance of emails being sent in English so they can be forwarded to EU partners, which would need to keep better informed of project activities and progress in Uzbekistan. EU partner finds, that there is not much communication with the partners in general, besides when a visit/meeting takes place – they would like to communicate and especially contribute more.

Organisation of the meetings/study visits so far (preparation, provision of information, objectives clearly formulated, opportunities for networking etc.)

In general, this item was evaluated well. Support seems to be also provided through the EU delegation in Tashkent. However, the definition of groups for the visits seems to be challenging and it was suggested to agree on a list of participants earlier for upcoming meetings.

Paying the costs of stay and the staff cost of the Uzbek partners remains challenging and could be solved through opening bank account for each partner - so far only 2 partners provided this. It is expected that as soon as partners from Uzbekistan get separate bank accounts money transfers will be easier.

Why did your university/institution join the project?

Reasons for joining are individual and cover different aspects: meeting the right/good partners, improving the national (higher education?) system (beyond the university level), linking education with the labour market (important for businesses also), sharing of good practices in teaching and learning as well as mutual learning from experiences in different countries.

What are the activities/features which you are developing through the project?

The activities/features are different for individual partners: organisational/managerial activities, organisation of/participation in study visits, educational activities and academic activities (papers and reports), improving the HE system in UZ (normative documents and learning materials), supporting the implementation of a credit system at higher education institutions in UZ, supporting the internationalisation of UZ higher education, enhance knowledge about higher education developments in UZ.

How do you use the findings of the project at your university/institution?

Challenges (like the changing of management board of university) occurred from the start of the project, the institutions think that NURSLING is worth it, and that they benefit from the project and from the material produced; several internal meetings were organised with the management and with the department of methodology. The project's output will be used for



the improvement of curricula, as after defining QF the UZ partners can adapt the learning programmes and organise re-training in programmes. For some the project also provides inspiration for being involved in and contribute to other/similar projects.

Is the project used as a tool for staff development?

For UZ universities the training opportunities help re-training of their staff, which is partly selected top-down by the university management. In some cases, staff participating in trainings in the frame of NURSLING will help the respective staff acquire points for future promotion (via internal ranking).

Professors from business partners will make new text books for teaching in line with the project results. One partner points out that the project fosters internationalisation of their staff and another highlights new project management skills. These different aspects highlight, according to another partners, the contribution of the project to LLL.

Which of the outputs/outcomes do you find most useful?

To some partners already the KoM provided relevant learnings which they found already useful; the same seems to hold true for the material that was provided during the summer academy at University Koblenz-Landau in July 2016.

One partner mentions the scope (largeness) of the project and hopes that they will be able to do what the project plans to do. Other comments: the project allows the staff “to be mobile”, gain experience, exchange with other countries and with other institutions in Uzbekistan, improve the learning process in Uzbekistan, joint discussions, initiation of the process for the development of a NQF and the development of guidelines.

Which of the outputs/outcomes do you not find so useful?

The partners did not identify outputs/outcomes that are not useful.

What would be useful that is not foreseen so far?

To be able to publish abroad (for impact points) - maybe EU partners could recommend some journals and magazines, where the UZ partners could publish; more frequent meetings and exchange of opinions; produce a book on our ideas on the problem of NQF; wider range of participants from different fields; streamline logistics/financial issues of the UZ partners; financial aspects need to be improved, solve issue with the equipment (it seems this is currently a problem in other EU projects in Uzbekistan).

What do you enjoy most about participating in the NURSLING project?

Learning outcomes from study visits; the people (very high level specialists); being part of the project, even though there are some problems; visit Bath and Austria; developing of learning process; learn about processes of learning in Europe; relationship with partners; social interaction with wonderful friends and colleagues

Other items raised:



- Quarterly bulletin was (again) suggested to be implemented – this was originally initiated by one partner and could now be taken over by another. EU partners could contribute to the bulletin.
- Additionally, a new representative from the Center for Development of Higher and Secondary Specialized Education (UZ) is needed.

4. OUTLOOK

This report is submitted to the project coordinator for feedback and provision of additional information if need be.

QA measures that will be taken in the second year of project implementation include the following:

- Fourth QA session at next project coordination meeting (including update of risk log)
- Field visits (could maybe be organized back-to-back with meetings envisaged in Uzbekistan for autumn 2017)