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IMPLEMENTATION OF THE QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MONTENEGRO

– PROJECT REPORT –

This project was implemented by the Quality Assurance Centre of the University of Montenegro and WUS-Austria. The project was financed by the Austrian Development Cooperation and the University of Montenegro.

The report on the project realization was adopted at the QA Board meeting, held on 16th of July 2010 at the University of Montenegro.

Implemented by
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Austrian
 Development Cooperation

www.entwicklung.at

UNIVERSITET ЦРНЕ ГОРЕ

Број 01-152

04.02. 2008 год.

ПОДГОРИЦА



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Development Cooperation



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MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

Between

The University of Montenegro

The Austrian Development Agency

And

World University Service - Austria

(The Signatories)

Regarding

THE PROJECT "SUPPORT TO HIGHER EDUCATION IN MONTENEGRO"

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INTRODUCTION

BOLOGNA PROCESS¹

Goals along the way towards the European Higher Education Area

The term Bologna Process implies higher education reform in which 47 European countries are currently involved. The main goal of this process is to increase the competitiveness and quality of European higher education in relation to other developed countries. This is to be achieved through the creation of a mutual European Higher Education Area – EHEA.

The Bologna Process started with the signing of the Bologna Declaration in September 1999, in Bologna, by ministers of education from 29 European countries. The Bologna Declaration was published on this occasion, bringing together the **main goals of the Bologna Process**:

1. Adoption of a system of easily readable and comparable degrees;
2. Adoption of an education system based on cycles;
3. Introducing the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System - ECTS;
4. Support for student and teacher mobility;
5. Improvement in the quality of higher education;
6. Promotion of the European dimension in higher education.

After the ministerial meeting where the Declaration was adopted, ministerial conferences were held in Prague (2001), Berlin (2003), Bergen (2005), London (2007) and Leuven (2009) where **new goals** were added:

- Introducing the concept of lifelong learning in higher education;
- Introducing the third cycle of postgraduate programmes;
- Establishing the European Research Area - ERA;
- Introducing a national framework for qualifications comparable to the Framework for Qualifications in the EHEA;
- Defining learning outcomes for all three cycles according to the Dublin Descriptors;
- Ensure quality in accordance with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in European Higher Education – ESG;
- Recognition of diplomas and other higher education qualifications in accordance with the Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region by the European Commission/UNESCO.

Considering that EHEA reform has a great impact to the rest of the world, ministries have adopted the Strategy for the EHEA in a global setting, 2007.

Implementation of the Bologna Declaration goals should be completed by the end of 2010, but there are announcements for the continuation of the process after the conference in Leuven (2020 Bologna after Bologna).

¹V. Vizek Vidović (ur.) (2009), E-portal: *Učenje i poučavanje u visokoškolskoj nastavi (UPraVO)*, Sveučilište u Zagrebu, Zagreb, RH, <http://domus.srce.hr/iuoun/UPraVO/>

HIGHER EDUCATION QUALITY

Terms and meanings

Intensive changes in conditions where higher education is realized after adopting the Bologna Declaration have led to the need for flexibility with a continuous increase in the number of students and network expansion of higher education institutions. As education is one of the main factors in the economic and social development of a country, quality in the area of higher education is a need of increasing significance. Positive scientific and professional experience with human resources shows that confidence in the quality of education could be gained through a developed quality system based on monitoring, assessment and evaluation of conditions, processes and outcomes in accordance with the adopted standards.

The unquestionable significance of quality in higher education requires its inclusion in all documents relating to higher education and is a constant theme in the process of education reform, following the principles of the Bologna Declaration.

The term itself is multidisciplinary and dynamic because it contains more diverse levels related to education form, the mission, goals and standards of study programmes or scientific research. This results in the practically imprecise definition of the term Quality, i.e. it can have a different meaning depending on the understanding of priorities in the separate elements. Some of its meanings are:

Quality as excellence is a traditional, elitist, education-centric meaning that only the highest standards of excellence are understood as true academic quality;

Quality as consistent is a concept that stresses the need to achieve or harmonize with widely accepted standards set by the accreditation body, i.e. the competent body for quality assurance, the focus being on the efficiency of the processes at work in the institution or programme in fulfilling the stated, given objectives and mission;

Quality as fitness for purpose a concept that focuses on the defined objectives and mission of the institution or programme with no check of the fitness of the processes themselves in regard to any external objectives or expectations;

Quality as enhancement or improvement is a concept focusing on the continuous search for permanent improvement, stressing the responsibility of the higher education institution to make the best use of its institutional autonomy and freedom.

Each approach has its advantages and disadvantages, but each approach has the following elements integrated:

- The guaranteed realization of minimal standards and benchmarks,
- The capacity to set the objectives in a diversifying context and to achieve them,
- The ability to meet the demands and expectations of direct and indirect consumers and stakeholders

Quality assurance, culture and evaluation

Quality assurance (QA) is a broad term related to a continuous process of higher education, institutions and study programmes quality system evaluation (monitoring, assessment, maintenance, guarantee and improvement). As a regulatory mechanism, quality

assurance focuses on accountability and improvement, and providing information through an agreed-upon and consistent process and established criteria. In relation to this, QA is considered as an assurance and improvement of quality and is dominantly identified with quality.

Many systems make a distinction between internal quality assurance (practice performed intra-institutionally in order to monitor and improve the quality of higher education) and external quality assurance (a supra-institutional scheme of assuring the quality of higher education institutions and study programmes).

Quality assurance demands an institutional mechanism adapted to the circumstances (i.e. sustained by a solid quality culture). **Quality culture** refers to a sequence of joint, adopted and integrated quality principles (quality pattern) that are implemented in an institution and its management. Quality culture could also be defined as the ability of an institution or individual programme to develop a quality assurance system in everyday activities, and therefore achieve a qualitative realization of planned activities without relying exclusively on periodic evaluation.

Quality management, quality enhancement, quality control and quality assessment are means through which quality assurance is ensured. **Quality assurance** in this sense, represents a real process of external evaluation of the quality of the higher education institution and its study programmes, conducted by an external commission. Accreditation (reaccreditation) is the outcome of quality assessment. In the evaluation of the quality assurance implementation, reports and reviews are often based on certain elements of internal or external quality assurance.

ACTIVITIES PLANNED FOR PROJECT REALIZATION

Harmonization with the European Higher Education Area – EHEA

Project activities were planned based on the fact that this was the beginning of a systematic approach to the *Implementation of the Quality Assurance System at the University of Montenegro*. Therefore, activities are divided into three basic groups of activities:

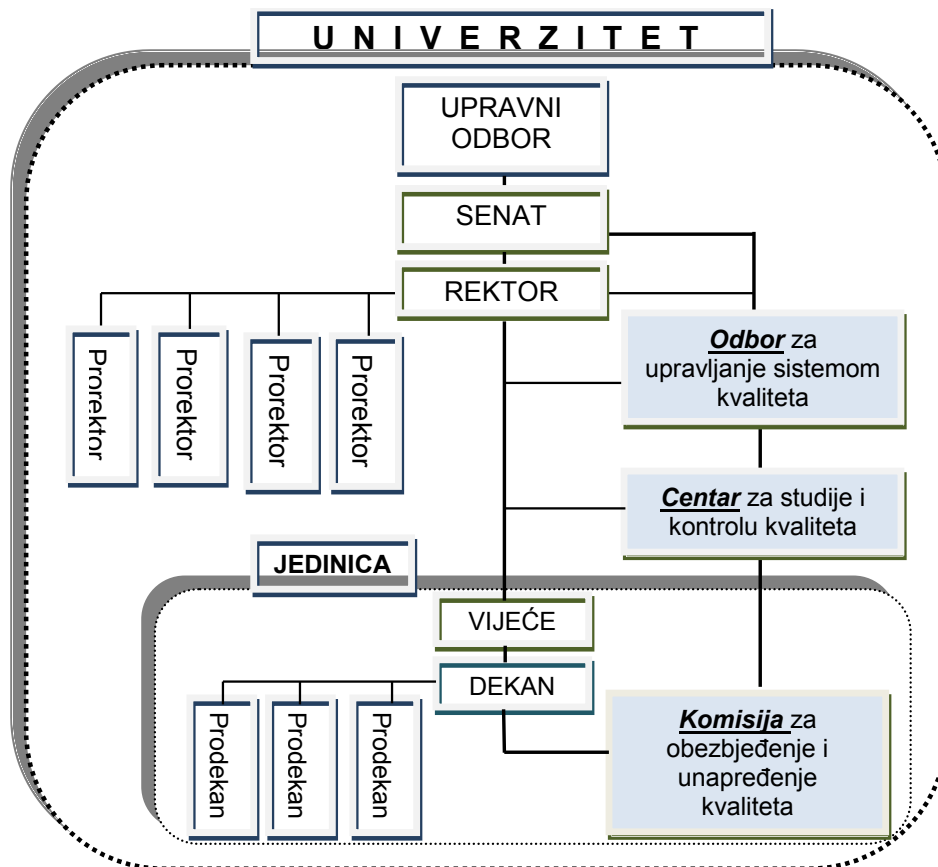
1. Organizational structure of the Quality System;
2. QA promotion and training at the university and its units;
3. Preparation of Guidelines for the internal evaluation of quality.

REALIZATION OF PLANNED ACTIVITIES – OVERVIEW

1. Organizational structure for quality assurance at the University

Task description	Status
ADOPT THE ORGANIZATIONAL SCHEME	REALIZED
ADOPT DECISIONS AND RULES FOR SYSTEM ESTABLISHMENT	

Preview of the adopted organization scheme



Adopted decisions and documents

1. *The decision on the establishment of the Centre of Studies and Quality Assurance* was brought by the Rector of the University of Montenegro, which is the realization of the conclusion to establish a central office for quality at the university level.
 - a. *The decision on quality system implementation and the Rulebook on the organization and responsibilities of a quality system* (June 2009) were adopted by the Senate of the University, which created conditions for an institutional approach to quality assurance, for system organization and rules under which the organization will function.
2. *Appointment of Quality Assurance Board members* (September 2009) by the Senate of the University, which ended the phase of forming relevant bodies at the university level.
3. Faculty councils adopted decisions on establishing *Commissions for Quality Assurance and Enhancement at the University Units* (October 2009-March 2010), which ended the phase of forming relevant bodies at the university units.
4. *The Quality Assurance Board* was established (December 2009), *Rules of procedure* and an *activity plan* for quality system implementation at the University were adopted. This marked the beginning of activities by QA bodies at the university level.
5. *Commissions for Quality Assurance and Enhancement* at the university units (December 2009–March 2010) were established, rules of procedure for commissions were adopted, other adopted documents were presented, as well as presented to the rest of the document and a work plan on the implementation of quality systems implementation projects at the University was adopted. This began with the work of bodies for the provision and improvement of the quality of the organizational units of the University.

APPENDICES: DECISIONS, RULEBOOKS AND RULES OF PROCEDURE

2. QA promotion and training at the University and its units (building institutional capacities)

2.1. Working group for QA implementation

Task description	Status
TEAM ESTABLISHMENT	REALIZED
TRAINING FOR TEAM MEMBERS FOR QAS IMPLEMENTATION ACTIVITIES	

Team building – selection of members, completed in the period January 2008 – March 2009

February 2009:

Training was organized in Graz, in order to prepare team members for QAS implementation.

April 2009 – May 2010:

Meetings were held on a monthly basis with coordinators from the WUS Central Office in Graz and the WUS Office in Podgorica, in order to analyze project realization.

2.2. Heads of QA commissions at the university units

Task description	Status
TRAINING FOR HEADS OF COMMISSIONS FOR QAS IMPLEMENTATION	REALIZED

Overview of workshops with heads or members of commission participating, held in the period April 2009 – May 2010.

April 2009:

"QAS Organization and Activities at the University of Montenegro" (harmonization with EHEA documents).

December 2009:

"Organization of QAS Commissions and Activities at the University Units".

March 2010:

"Methods and Modes of Teaching (Learning and Teaching): Creating and Structuring Courses and Communication Skills".

April 2010:

"Methods and Modes of Teaching (Learning and Teaching): Presentation Skills and IT Support".

May 2010:

"Methods and Modes of Teaching (Learning and Teaching): Teaching Methods, Mentorship and Evaluation".

2.3. QAS Management

Task description	Status
CURRENT ISSUES REGARDING QAS MANAGEMENT – Opportunities and possibilities opposed to risks and threats –	REALIZED

Overview-Workshop for members of management teams of the University and its units held in period April 2009 – June 2010.

April 2010:

“Current Topics: PDCA – Quality Cycle, Role of the Management Board and Council, New Modes of Cooperation Between the Rectorate and Faculties, Study Programmes, Research and Development, Student Evaluation, External Evaluation – Peer Review”.

May 2010:

“Cooperation Between the University and Industry, Inclusion of Practice into Education Process and Evaluation of the University under the Rules of EQAR”.

June 2010:

“Current Topics: Enrolment, Internship and Practical Work, Teaching Materials and their Adjustment, Student Workload, Teacher Workload”.

APPENDIX: AGENDAS AND PRESENTATIONS

2.4. Cooperation with universities that have implemented their quality assurance system according to the EHEA standards.

Task description	Status
AGREEMENT ON COOPERATION WITH THE UNIVERSITY OF MOSTAR	REALIZED

December 2009:

An annex was signed to the Agreement on cooperation in the area of higher education quality system assurance and enhancement between the University of Montenegro and the University of Mostar.

The University of Montenegro and the University of Mostar signed the Agreement on cooperation. Cooperation in the area of quality refers to assistance provided by the University of Mostar, which already implements internal quality assessment and has conducted external evaluation of quality system twice.

APPENDIX: ANNEX TO THE AGREEMENT ON COOPERATION

2.5. Web site and network

Task description	Status
PREPARATION AND SETTING UP OF THE STATIC WEB SITE FOR QUALITY AND NETWORK FOR CONTACT BETWEEN PARTICIPANTS IN THE PROCESS OF QUALITY IMPLEMENTATION	REALIZED

March 2010:

A static web site www.gas.ac.me was set up, containing all relevant data on quality system elements.

April 2010:

A network for participants in the quality system was implemented (name.surname@gas.ac.me), and e-mail accounts created for members of the Board, working team, and heads of commissions for quality system enhancement at the university units.



Note: Further developments of the web site are planned

Task description	Status
WEB SITE MODERNIZATION – MOVING TO DYNAMIC WEB SITE	IPA – Project (Preparations in progress)

2.6. Brochures about the project

Task description	Status
PREPARATION, PRINTING AND DISTRIBUTION OF BROCHURES CONTAINING BASIC INFORMATION ON THE PROJECT	REALIZED

December 2009:

The first brochure “HIGHER EDUCATION QUALITY – Chance for the University of Montenegro” was prepared and distributed (circulation -1000 copies, distributed to all university units at the workshop with heads of commissions).

April 2010:

The second brochure “QAS IMPLEMENTATION AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MONTENEGRO” (circulation - 500 copies, distributed to all university units at the workshop with heads of commissions).

APPENDIX: BROCHURES

3. Guidelines and documents for internal quality system evaluation

3.1. Guidelines

Task description	Status
PREPARATION OF GUIDELINES FOR INTERNAL EVALUATION IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE RULEBOOK, DIRECTIONS AND FORMS FOR INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL EVALUATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS	Final preparations. Next step - public discussion and adoption.

During the total period of project activities:

Guidelines were planned and prepared that should include evaluation, analysis and reporting for the education process in accordance with standards and EHEA

(ENQA) directions.

Typical guidelines for internal quality assessment are:

- o Evaluation of teaching by students,
- o Evaluation of teaching methods by teachers,
- o Evaluation of expert services,
- o Questionnaire for graduates,
- o Questionnaire for employers,
- o Enrolment analysis,
- o Exam result analysis,
- o Analysis of year-to-year student progress,
- o Analysis of graduation success rates,
- o Final report on internal quality evaluation.

Procedure of adopting documents at the University will be performed as follows:

- The first version, after its consideration by the QAS Board, will be on public discussion;
- After public discussion, guidelines will be adopted by the Senate of the University of Montenegro (we have planned to submit guidelines for the Senate meeting in October 2010);
- Adopted documents will be printed and distributed to university units;
- During preparations, a meeting will be held with the heads of commissions, where the instructions for use will be presented. This meeting will be held in November 2010.

3.2. Additional documents to Guidelines

Task description	Status
DESCRIPTION OF INTERNAL EVALUATION PROCESSES	Final preparations. Next step - public discussion and adoption.

Guidelines should include evaluation, analysis and reporting of the education process in accordance with the standards and directions of the EHEA. The process is based on ENQA standards and directions, therefore additional instructions are needed in order to implement standards and directions adequately.

In order to adequately understand the process, besides presentations and instructions held at workshops, the following is prepared:

- o Description of the teaching process,
- o Learning outcomes in higher education,
- o Student services.

The above will be published and distributed to all University employees during the period of public discussion. **Additional explanations will also be available at the web site www.qas.ac.me, through presentations from workshops.**

APPENDIX: GUIDELINES AND ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTS

NOTE: ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTS WILL BE PUBLISHED AS A HANDBOOK FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE

4. Equipment

IT equipment

Task description	Status
PROVIDE IT EQUIPMENT FOR THE CENTRAL QAS OFFICE AT THE UNIVERSITY AND ONE FACULTY OFFICE	REALIZED

April 2010:

IT equipment (computer, printer, laptop, and projector) was purchased and installed at the Centre for Studies and Quality Assessment at the University of Montenegro and at the Faculty of Fine Arts in Cetinje.

These two offices are equipped to design, prepare and print (copy) documents for project realization and further activities in area of quality.

APPENDIX: EQUIPMENT SPECIFICATION

FURTHER ACTIVITIES

1. HARMONIZATION WITH NEW AMENDMENTS TO THE LAW

Amendments to the Law on Higher Education

Task description	Status
HARMONIZATION WITH NEW AMENDMENTS TO THE LAW ON HIGHER EDUCATION IN MONTENEGRO (continuation of reforms)	The University should harmonize its regulations with the new amendments

Normative acts by the University should be harmonized with the new adopted Amendments to the Law on Higher Education. Modifications should be performed during the academic year 2010/11.

2. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE QUALITY SYSTEM

2. 1. Former evaluation of the University

Task description	Status
PANEL CONCLUSIONS 2003	Review after three years: Working Team is to prepare the procedure (November 2010)
REACCREDITATION CONCLUSIONS 2007	

Three years after the former internal evaluation and reaccreditation status of the University and its units should be reviewed in relation to tasks and plans that were pointed out during evaluation (internal and external) and reaccreditation. The Working Team will prepare the procedure and directions for the University and its units (elements realized within the existing projects will taken into consideration in the preparation of directions).

2.2. Strategic documents for quality assurance at the University

Task description	Status
DEFINING THE UNIVERSITY'S MISSION	IPA – Project (Preparations in progress)
DEVELOPMENT OF THE STRATEGY FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE	
DEVELOPMENT OF THE PLAN FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE	

Directions:

EDUCATION

Flexible education in accordance with the needs in the labour market and permanent education.

SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH AND ARTISTIC WORK

Following standards in research in order to achieve quality in the areas of science, education and art, and the importance of research and competence in education.

DEVELOPMENT

International surroundings for the modernization of society, characterized by cohesion, respect for differences, increasing intercultural competences and

abilities for democratic management

2.3. IT support for QAS implementation

Task description	Status
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY CENTRE - EQUIPPING AND TRAINING FOR ASSISTANCE IN QAS IMPLEMENTATION	IPA – Project (Preparations in progress)

September 2009 – June 2010:

IT support for QAS implementation implies:

- Purchase and installation of necessary equipment;
- Development and implementation of software for procedures that will be practiced;
- Training for employees at the Information Technology Centre in order to control and use adopted procedures at the university units;
- Training for employees at the university units in order to analyse collected data and use analysis results to improve organization and work in a unique quality assurance system.

3. PROJECT CONTINUATION OF STUDY PROGRAMME REFORM

Structure of study programmes in accordance with labour market needs

Task description	Status
DEVELOP NEW STUDY PROGRAMME STRUCTURES (CURRICULA) AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MONTENEGRO (FOR FLEXIBLE EDUCATION OF STUDENTS ACCORDING TO LABOUR MARKET NEEDS)	<i>A preliminary programme is prepared which enables realization of this task. Preliminary discussions for funding are in progress.</i>

Basic activities:

1. DEVELOPMENT OF STUDY PROGRAMME STRUCTURES WITH DEFINED STUDY OUTCOMES (COMPETENCES) IN ACCORDANCE WITH LABOUR MARKET NEEDS;
2. DEVELOPMENT OF COURSES AND MODULES ACCORDING TO LEARNING OUTCOMES;
3. FORMING MODELS OF FLEXIBLE STUDY PROGRAMMES IN RELATION TO THE LABOUR MARKET NEEDS;
4. HARMONIZATION OF STUDY PROGRAMME RULES WITH LEARNING OUTCOMES;
5. DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF STUDENT SERVICES MODELS.