

CAMINOS – Quality Management Plan

Handbook

TUBerlin and ANECA

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1. Introduction

The Erasmus+ project CAMINOS has a significant and wide-ranging ambitions concerning a development in a major current area of the internationalisation of higher education such as improving the capacity of universities, university associations and networks to enhance, promote and manage internal, regional Latin American student and staff mobility, deepening the existence of a true Latin American Higher Education Space.

The project is directed to these topics by focusing on three particular axes:

- i) A research/mapping phase for a) existing South American mobility schemes and their management practices and rules, b) the actors and universities that participate in them and c) the statistics on students and study programmes involved in them;
- ii) A development phase for the generation of a Handbook to guide both the linking and the enhancement of existing mobility schemes to guide the promotion of South American (SA) regional mobility, purposes and forms, defining a „South American mobility model“;
- iii) and an implementation phase, whereby some elements of the Handbook will be applied by both the partner associations and the partner universities, to their existing intra-LA student mobility programmes.

In a second phase, three Focus Groups (one in each partner country) will take place to design a Handbook for common Latin American mobility model. Each Focus Group (FG) will bring together a different grouping of experts and partners, and examine a specific topic that will be crucial to the model:

- FG1) governance and management of mobility programmes (involving primarily the associations/networks, responsible for driving mobility programmes);
- FG2) strategising mobility, in the context of institutional partnerships and joint degrees;
and
- FG3) support services and general mobility quality tools.

The FGs will be mirrored by three Study Visits to European partner universities that will have a capacity building focus for managing mobility. DAAD/TUB, Montpellier/UB, and Coimbra will each host a one week Study Visit of a delegation of the South American Partners (ranging from

their management staff to staff from international offices) to Berlin, Barcelona/Montpellier, and Lisbon/Coimbra (respectively).

To avoid unnecessary duplication in monitoring the whole project as well as the different Work Packages, the quality assurance / quality management system will be subject to constant monitoring and evaluation, both within the partnership as well as externally. In this way there will be a more immediate opportunity to optimise and implement the ‘plan-do-check-act-plan’ cycle that underpins the overall Project and thus enhance its outcomes.

Therefore, a particular emphasis will be made to the leaders of the different FGs to follow the templates developed as part of the Quality Plan to monitor the fulfilment of their tasks while ensuring to bear in mind the gathering of the necessary quality indicators.

The internal quality assurance will be essentially driven by the Project Management Team (PMT), who will receive input and guidance from the Advisory Board and from TU Berlin and ANECA, who will develop Project Quality Indicators at the beginning of the project.

The Quality Management Plan (WP5) will integrate the monitoring and evaluation steps described in the proposal. The key features of the QMS are that i) it is designed around the normal (Bologna) expectations of ‘internal’ monitoring/quality assurance, and ii) it requires only that key summary evidence and ‘self-reflections’ from the different Work Packages are reported to and coordinated ‘externally’ as the Project develops.

The QMS integrates the monitoring reports from the Work Packages involving the different Focus Groups, Study Visits and pilots to test the Handbook of the project and deliverables to be issued within the overall Quality Management Plan which itself uses standardised self-evaluation templates for all Work Packages across the Project

To ensure consistency and transparency across and throughout the project, the QMS Handbook includes a series of summary Quality Management System Templates to be completed by each Work Package at key times. In this way the emphasis within the project will be for each Work Package to focus on its anticipated Outcome(s) and timeframe(s), whilst the overall QMP will demonstrate i) progress made; ii) note additional actions identified within the WPs; iii) identify and collate opportunities for further enhancement.

CAMINOS Handbook (based on the FG and Study Visit outcomes), will provide a detailed description of the principles of CAMINOS, good/common practices for managing Latin American

mobility promotion of Latin American mobility and additional considerations for associations and networks that manage mobility programmes. The Handbook will stress that it is a means to bridge existing mobility programmes in South/Latin America, to enhance and promote them and eventually to generate more exchange agreements between LA institutions, associations and networks.

Finally, external quality assurance will be ensured by two means: an external evaluation and an Advisory Board set up among the associate partners. Both views, the internal and the external, have to result in a fine-tuning management towards not only the correct running and the achievements of the project but also about its on-going monitoring and its further sustainability.

2. Rationale for Quality Management System

In line with Bologna principles, the Quality Management System (QMS) is designed around Self-assessment (“user oriented focus”), against the stated aims, objectives and anticipated outcomes, and with a common template to ensure effective and efficient comparability. The QMS anticipates an on-going and explicit commitment to ‘internal’ monitoring by each of the WPs in ways that are most appropriate to explicitly demonstrate their progress without additional administrative requirements.

The key challenge for a project like this from the viewpoint of its quality management is how to harmonise the necessary autonomous development of the different Work Packages, while maintaining the coordination of the activities involved, the deliverables to be produced throughout the timeframe defined. Definitely, it is a delicate balance between autonomy and coordination.

A second crucial challenge might be the risk that the high activity load of the project may imply that partners do not take enough time to reflect collectively on the overall quality of the project.

Therefore, the Quality Plan, as well as the documents derived from it, has to deal with this tension by means of designing templates and forms that can provide the people responsible for both Work Packages and activities with useful tools to check their activities towards the achievement of a particular task as well as the internal management group (TUBerlin and ANECA) with the necessary feedback to monitor the progress of the project and the timely delivery of deliverables.

Self-regulated delicate balance between internal control and external supervision/monitoring

The Project has foreseen an additional mechanism in order to ensure the implementation of the project according to the objectives guided by two different bodies: the PMT as well as the Advisory Board. The PTM will act as an “internal” monitoring and feedback “device” complementing the role played by the Advisory board, set up with key associations and organisations in Latina America and The Caribbean and providing an external project evaluation as well.

The Advisory Board’s composition will allow a particular useful regional perspective to the external check serving as an expert group interpreting and reflecting on the different advances of the Project and its deliverables –especially the Handbook– from a broader viewpoint in terms of their relevance/pertinence of the Handbook within the existing mobility programmes and initiatives in the Latin American setting.

This mechanism serves as a counterbalance for the quality management implemented by the Project which is, obviously, the main asset to ensure the correct monitoring of the implementation of the project’s tasks and activities.

Finally, and as part of the overall Quality Assurance Plan, the external evaluator’s role will play a relevant part in conducting a constructive evaluation “from outside”, by working according to the terms of reference and attending key project events/interviewing partners. This evaluator should also check the set of indicators designed by the quality assurance team of the project, as well as the Terms of Reference for the external evaluation. The external evaluation report presented to the Steering Committee will show the achievements of this particular work package.

Therefore, the triangulation of the three dimensions defined by the Quality Management Plan, (i) the internal approach on monitoring, evaluation and quality control, (ii) the external mechanism established within the Project by the Advisory Board and the PMT meetings and (iii) the “peripheral” contrast represented by the external evaluator, will provide CAMINOS with a robust Quality Management Plan as well as a tool for enhancing the Project’s outcomes and expectations.

3. Monitoring, Evaluation and Quality Control / Assurance / Enhancement

3.1. Quality control and tools

Within the CAMINOS Project TUBerlin and ANECA have responsibility for the Quality Management Plan. This includes a Handbook that sets out the Rationale for the Quality Management approach, a series of Quality Management Indicators for monitoring project progress, defining in the Quality Management Report Templates that will be the main approach to evaluating and quality assuring the progress and outcomes of the Project defined in the indicators therein.

The quality control of the Project will be completed with the regular PMT meetings, annual SC meetings, and Advisory Board's meetings and the external evaluation report conducted by the external evaluator.

Therefore the two main tools defined by the Quality Plan of CAMINOS, the set of indicators and the QMRTs defined for each Work Package, will also provide the range of the (self-)control of the tools designed by the Project.

The Quality Management Indicators (QMIs) are defined against each of the 4 objectives (SOE) of CAMINOS and breaking down in the different WPs across the wide range of Activities/Outcomes defined throughout the Project

This two-tier matrix allows a quick and easy look to the particular achievement of each SOE defined by the project with regard to every single WP the SOE is related to, based on its various activities/outcomes set up by the Project.

This practical display to the particular achievement of the Project's SOEs through its various WPs, allows a sort of a quality-control-at-first-sight which favours identifying the general progress of the Project according to its time-frame in terms of objectives on the one side, or identifying deviations in the fulfilment of the different WP's outcomes on the other. This tool proves to be an important mechanism for both quality assurance and Steering Committee's purposes of enhancement and achievement respectively.

Obviously, any detailed account on the progression and achievement of the outcomes of a particular WP should be checked more thoroughly through the particular analysis of its Quality Management Report Template, which will be commented immediately below.

The Quality Management Report Templates (QMRTs) involve intermediate and final self-assessment by each Work Package of their achievements towards their specific deliverables and finally will provide an overall view on the project outcomes. The QMSTs are supported by Guidelines to ensure most effective (and efficient) self-assessment and monitoring. The Quality Management Plan, along with the necessary supervision led by the PTM's meetings, will allow checking that data is collated from each Work Package at appropriate times to ensure that any necessary improvement cycle can be implemented, and any enhancement opportunities can be shared without delay.

The QMRTs should be completed by each WP's person(s) in charge to evaluate their progress, on a time basis appropriate to the delivery of their anticipated outcomes, and (if necessary) additionally at any specific deliverable date(s).

The common Quality Management Report Templates for each Work Package will ensure self-evaluation of its progress and will include:

- i) On-going progress of the specific WP to its general progression and Outcomes. Progress against anticipated outcomes will be self-assessed as either 'fully achieved', 'partially achieved' or 'further work required' with opportunity to provide supporting evidence and/or commentary.
- ii) On-going progress of the specific WP to its Deliverables. Progress against anticipated outcomes will be self-assessed as either 'fully achieved', 'partially achieved' or 'further work required' with opportunity to provide supporting evidence and/or commentary.

The QMRTs will be 'externally' evaluated by TUBerlin and ANECA to ensure the "Commitment of partners to the QM plan and [their] continuous improvement through the improvement cycle plan- do - check - act - plan". If necessary any delays or shortcomings will be clearly identified and discussed with the specific WP a view to constructive improvement in development and/or implementation.

Importantly, TUBerlin and ANECA will ensure that any identified opportunities / possibilities for enhancement will a) be communicated to all partners and b) have their potential maximised for the Focus Groups and any subsequent Outcomes.

The final version of the Quality Management Report Template asks for comment from each individual Work Package concerning their contributions to the overall Project Outcomes,

particularly with regard to: i) Target Groups, ii) Expected impact, iii) quantitative indicators, and iv) the qualitative indicators, as identified in the initial application. It is anticipated that these QMRTs will provide the evidence base to inform the Final Report and substantiate its Conclusions and Policy Recommendations.

3.2. Quality control, reporting, and enhancement

The time-frame of the Project CAMINOS is an essential point of reference to be aligned to the particular progress of the different WPs and activities deployed in the Project. The QMRT should always be checked against the overall chronogram of CAMINOS showing the start times and durations of the various WP to ensure a correct implementation.

This time frame will also allow bearing in mind the various “Interim Reports” which have to be “fed” with the achievements and outcomes derived from the different activities and deliverables reached and produced.

Each QMRT can also act as a sort of a “self-evaluation report” of the WP on its progress against its stated aims and objectives. Rather than being ‘open-ended’ and potentially time consuming, QMRTs have a strong potential for each WP to self-evaluate its progress towards its Tasks and Deliverables underpinned by the “fully achieved/partially achieved/further work required”, with the opportunity to provide summary evidence to support its self-evaluation outcome.

The QMRTs also provides for interim commenting on

- Leadership (of the WP)
- Continuous improvement (next steps to take and comments)

Clearly, should there be any significant problem at an interim reporting stage then this will need to be identified and, in the first instance it will be for the WP to implement any remedial actions required to bring the WP back ‘on track’.

In all cases each WP returns its QMRT to the PMT where progress will be noted and integrated with the work from other WP. It will be for the PMT to identify any potential emerging synergies and/or mismatches between anticipated and actual progress and inform the Quality Management Plan Team accordingly.

Whilst the Quality Management Plan does not envisage any major problems within the Project, should any significant or potentially significant problem arise outside of the normal Reporting

cycle it is the responsibility of the WP to bring this to attention –returning it to the PMT who will report TUBerlin and ANECA under WP5 to take the necessary account of the event.

3.3. Final Reporting from individual Work Packages

Each QMRT provides for a Work Package to identify:

- A) Contribution to Project Outcomes
- B) Engagement with other partners responsible for actions in the WP
- C) Impact
- D) Factors contributing to the WPs outcomes and (in particular) any enhancement opportunities

QMST provides for each Work Package to identify the specific contributions of each Work Package to the overall results of CAMINOS, with specific regard to the pre-identified information shown by the QMRTs (Tasks, subtasks, responsible, progress towards tasks) and, perhaps more significantly, its Next steps to take and comments which give room for recommendations and conclusions.

Since each WPs has its own implementation “rationale” throughout the Project where different “starting and completion dates” are combined, a short implementation account from each WP on a year basis should be very useful in order to strengthen the coordination of the external quality assurance mechanisms of CAMINOS. Such account/report could state explicitly the state-of-the-art of the development of the WP allowing delays or incidents to be identified and explained accordingly. For those WPs whose starting date has not yet begun a “Not Apply” note would be enough to show its current situation.

The whole document with the short accounts works as a simple but powerful tool for internal quality control and assurance as well as enhancement, without introducing any extra and burdensome tasks to the WP leaders.

Each WP will be responsible for returning to PMT its QMRT. PMT will co-ordinate and integrate the information returned and provide the Project with a Report on these outcomes (and supporting evidence). This internal Report will provide the bases for the substantive Report that will conclude the CAMINOS Project

Although not specified as a ‘deliverable’ in the initial application, it is anticipated that on-going monitoring by PMT and Advisory Board and ANECA and evaluation by TUBerlin and ANECA (in WP 5), and the feedback and, where necessary, advice provided, could form the basis of a final QMP Report that may be a constructive addition to the Project Outcomes. Regardless the particular report submitted by the external evaluator as established in the proposal of the Project and in the Terms of Reference defined in Annex III.