



Working for the UK higher education sector

Guide to The Bologna Process

The UK HE Europe Unit

Introduction

This booklet seeks to provide the UK higher education (HE) sector with an authoritative guide to the Bologna Process to create the European Higher Education Area. It aims to help the sector to engage with the Bologna Process and to benefit from the opportunities it creates. Clarifying key ministerial agreements, it dispels the myths surrounding the consequences of 'Bologna' for the UK and indicates sources of further information.

The Bologna Declaration which aimed to create the 'European Higher Education Area' (EHEA) by 2010 was signed in 1999 by Baroness Blackstone, former UK Minister for higher education, and Ministers from 28 other European countries. Through specific objectives, the Bologna Process is working towards developing a coherent European higher education (HE) space to foster employability and mobility in Europe. It also aims to increase the competitiveness of European higher education in the world.

While in 1999 the UK was already engaged in actions which would fulfil the Bologna objectives, the 2001 Prague ministerial Communiqué reviewing progress in the Bologna Process, introduced new areas of action to which the UK HE sector is responding. In just over four years the Process has grown from six objectives, known as 'action lines', to ten and now has over 40 signatory countries. The Bologna Process now includes actions to be implemented under a range of policy areas, including quality assurance, credit transfer and accumulation, lifelong learning and, more recently, doctoral-level qualifications and joint degrees.

If UK interests are to be fully voiced in debates on these important issues, it is vital that the UK HE sector engages in the Process in the lead-up to the next ministerial summit taking place in Bergen, Norway, in May 2005. Failure to do so could mean UK HE loses out on the potential benefits and opportunities offered by the creation of the European Higher Education Area. The European University Association Convention of European Higher Education Institutions taking place in Glasgow on 31 March – 2 April 2005 provides an important opportunity for UK institutions to influence the next phase of the Bologna Process.

'Bologna' aims to facilitate and promote greater mobility so that students will acquire the skills employers are looking for, such as cultural maturity, increased confidence and language skills. It provides a useful forum for networking and exchange of good practice across Europe. Crucially, a UK HE sector firmly embedded in the coherent European Higher Education Area of 40 countries will enable institutions to enhance their European and international profile.

This booklet will be updated following the ministerial summit in Bergen with the support of the Europe Unit's stakeholders, including the Funding Councils for England, Scotland and Wales, The Quality Assurance Agency and the Standing Conference of Principals. It is designed to provide guidance on specific issues but also a general overview of the Bologna Process. I hope you find it helpful.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tish Bourke". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Tish Bourke
Manager,
UK HE Europe Unit

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Key dates in the Bologna Process

1998 – Sorbonne Declaration

The Sorbonne Declaration in 1998, signed by Ministers responsible for higher education in France, Germany, Italy and the UK, identified the building blocks for the Bologna Process. This was the first step in agreeing that European higher education systems should be coherent and compatible to strengthen recognition of qualifications and international competitiveness of European higher education. The Declaration included calls for a two-cycle (undergraduate/postgraduate) degree structure and the use of credits.

1999 – Bologna Declaration

In 1999, Ministers from 29 European countries, including the UK, met in Bologna and signed a Declaration establishing a European Higher Education Area by 2010. The initial broad objectives of the Bologna Process became: to remove the obstacles to student mobility across Europe; to enhance the attractiveness of European higher education worldwide; to establish a common structure of higher education systems across Europe, and; for this common structure to be based on two main cycles, undergraduate and graduate. This in turn would lead to greater transparency and recognition of qualifications.

2001 – Creation of the European University Association

At a meeting in Salamanca, Spain, the Association of European Universities and the Confederation of European Union Rectors' Conferences merged to create the European University Association (EUA). As a single organisation serving and representing the university community in Europe, the EUA provides a stronger voice and a more powerful presence for institutions in the Bologna Process.

2001 – Prague ministerial summit

Ministers from 32 Bologna signatory countries met in Prague for the first biennial summit to assess progress made according to the action lines set out in the Bologna Declaration. Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to the Bologna Process. They welcomed the involvement of a number of new actors: the European University Association (EUA), National Union of Students in Europe (ESIB), European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE) and the European Commission. Ministers agreed on three new action lines to add to the six in the Bologna Declaration: a focus on lifelong learning, the inclusion of higher education institutions and students in the process, and the promotion of the attractiveness of the European Higher Education Area.

2003 – Berlin ministerial summit

The second Bologna ministerial review summit took place in Berlin in 2003. Ministers called for a focus on three intermediate priorities for the next two years: quality assurance, the two-cycle system and the recognition of degrees and periods of study. The development of an overarching European HE qualifications framework alongside national qualifications frameworks and the award of the Diploma Supplement by all HEIs by 2005 were also called for. Ministers considered it necessary to go beyond the focus on two main cycles of higher education and agreed on a new action line: to include the doctoral level as the 'third cycle' in the Bologna Process to build links between the European Higher Education and Research Areas. Ministers accepted requests for membership of the Bologna Process from countries in southeast Europe and Russia, expanding the Process to 40 European countries.

2005 – Bergen ministerial summit

The next ministerial summit will take place in Bergen, Norway, on 19-20 May 2005 and is likely to welcome further new members to the Bologna Process. The UK is likely to host the 2007 ministerial summit.

Further information

The full texts of Bologna Process ministerial agreements can be found at: www.bologna-bergen2005.no/

Decision-making in the Bologna Process

An intergovernmental process

Decision-making in the Bologna Process is carried out through an 'intergovernmental' process by Ministers from signatory countries meeting at biennial summits to move the Process forward. It is not administered by the European Commission as competence for education lies with European Union (EU) member states. Decisions are reached by the consensus of the 40 signatory countries involved. This approach acknowledges the diversity in Europe's higher education systems.

Ministerial summits

The most important forum in the decision-making process is the two-yearly ministerial review of 'Bologna', when education Ministers from each signatory country meet to assess progress and to plot the course for the near future. The next ministerial summit will take place in May 2005 in Bergen, following those in Prague in 2001 and in Berlin in 2003.

The ministerial summits are supported by two groups: The Bologna Follow-Up Group and the Bologna Board.

The Bologna Follow-Up Group

The Bologna Follow-Up Group (BFUG) consists of representatives from all 40 Bologna signatory countries. The Group is chaired by the current EU Presidency, with the host country of the next ministerial summit as Vice-Chair. The BFUG's role is to help signatory countries to follow up on the recommendations made at the ministerial summits. The Group produces an official work programme of seminars on priority issues between ministerial summits.

The Bologna Board

The Bologna Board is smaller and is chaired by the current EU Presidency with the host of the forthcoming ministerial summit as Vice-Chair. Previous and succeeding EU Presidencies are represented and three participating countries are elected by the Bologna Follow-up Group for one year.

Role of the European Commission

Membership of the Bologna Process extends beyond the EU to forty signatory countries. As such, the Bologna Process is conducted outside the framework of the EU. However, it is important to note that the majority of signatory countries (25 countries following the recent enlargement of the EU) are EU member states. The Commission's competence in the education sphere is based on Article 149 of the EU Treaty which entitles the Community "*to contribute to the development of quality education by encouraging co-operation between member states*". The Commission sees an important role for the Bologna Process in achieving the objectives of the EU's so-called 'Lisbon Strategy' to make the EU 'the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world by 2010'. EU moves towards enhanced European cooperation in vocational education and training through the so-called 'Bruges-Copenhagen Process' are inextricably linked to the Bologna Process.

Bologna signatory countries have granted the European Commission a special status as a full member of the BFUG and the Bologna Board. This status and the European Commission's role as a source of funding for Bologna projects gives the Commission considerable influence in the Bologna Process.

Other organisations

The Council of Europe (CoE), the European University Association (EUA), the European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE) and the National Union of Students in Europe (ESIB) are consultative members of both the BFUG and the Bologna Board. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization European Centre for Higher Education (UNESCO-CEPES) is a consultative member of the BFUG. This arrangement has enabled these important stakeholders to play an active role in Bologna Process decision-making.

Further information

Members of the Bologna Follow-Up Group and the Bologna Board:
www.bologna-bergen2005.no

European Commission:
europa.eu.int/comm/education/policies/educ/bologna/bologna_en.html.

Key Players

In the UK...

Government – Ministers from the UK attend biennial Bologna ministerial summits. Officials from the Department for Education and Skills (DfES), and the Scottish Executive, are members of the Bologna Follow-Up Group. As holders of the Presidency of the European Union during the second half of 2005 and as likely hosts of the 2007 Bologna ministerial summit, UK Government officials will hold a place on the smaller Bologna Board from January 2005 to December 2006.
www.dfes.gov.uk www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Education

The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) – QAA plays an active role in the Bologna Process, notably in European level debates on quality assurance and accreditation. QAA is represented on the Board of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education. www.qaa.ac.uk

The UK HE Europe Unit – The Unit coordinates UK HE sector involvement in the Bologna Process and other European initiatives and policy debates. See page 40 for more details. www.europeunit.ac.uk

UK Socrates-Erasmus Council (UKSEC) – UKSEC administers the EU Socrates-Erasmus programme in the UK, providing information to higher education institutions (HEIs) and students on the EU's education and training programmes. UKSEC plays an active role in European HE debates, projects and events. It is responsible for the administration of the UK's national Bologna Promoters which are listed on the UKSEC website. Funded by the European Commission, the Promoters provide advice and support to institutions on the Bologna Process, notably on the Diploma Supplement and the European Credit Transfer System. www.erasmus.ac.uk

National Recognition Information Centre (UK NARIC) - UK NARIC is a national agency under contract to the DfES. It is the official source of information and advice on the comparability of international qualifications from over 180 countries worldwide with those in the UK. UK NARIC provides information about education systems and qualifications to HEIs, professional bodies and commercial organisations. www.naric.org.uk

Engineering Council UK (EC UK) – EC UK regulates the engineering profession in the UK and formally represents the interests of UK engineers abroad. EC UK is participating in a EU-funded project which intends to propose a framework for setting up a European system for accreditation of engineering education. www.engc.org.uk

At European Level...

European Commission (EC) - Bologna is an intergovernmental process and, as such, the EC does not have competence to legislate on the Bologna Process. However, the EC is having a growing influence over the Process by participating in Bologna decision-making forums and by funding a range of Bologna projects. www.europa.eu.int/comm/education/index_en.html

European University Association (EUA) – The EUA is a consultative member of the Bologna Follow-Up Group and Board. It is the representative organisation of both the European universities and the national rectors' conferences. The EUA has 702 members in 45 countries across Europe. Around 80 UK universities are members, as well as Universities UK whose Chief Executive and President sit on the EUA Council. www.eua.be

European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE) – EURASHE is a consultative member of the Bologna Follow-Up Group and Board. It is the European representative organisation of higher education institutions. The Standing Conference of Principles (SCOP) is a member and sits on the EURASHE Executive Council. www.eurashe.be

The National Unions of Students in Europe (ESIB) – ESIB is a consultative member of the Bologna Follow-Up Group and Board. It is the umbrella organisation of 48 national unions of students from 36 countries. The National Union of Students (NUS) is a member and sits on the ESIB Executive Committee. www.esib.org

The Council of Europe (CoE) - The CoE is an observer on the Bologna Follow-Up Group and Board. It makes important contributions to the Bologna Process, notably through the COE/UNESCO Lisbon Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications. It provides a bridge to countries not yet party to the Bologna Process and the EU, as well as a platform for debate between ministries and academics. The Council of Europe holds its annual higher education plenary session each autumn which is attended by a UK government and higher education sector representative. www.coe.int

European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) –

ENQA's members are currently public authorities, associations of HEIs and quality assurance agencies. The UK's QAA is a member. The Berlin ministerial Communiqué mandates ENQA "to develop an agreed set of standards, procedures and guidelines on quality assurance, to explore ways of ensuring an adequate peer review system for quality assurance and/or accreditation agencies or bodies, and to report back through the Follow-up Group to Ministers in 2005."

www.enqa.net

The ENIC-NARIC Network – The ENIC-NARIC Network is made up of national recognition information centres in EU member states (the NARICs) and those in non-EU European countries (the ENICs). The network provides a forum for exchange of information on recognition issues. The network is part of the EU's Socrates-Erasmus programme which stimulates the mobility of students and staff between higher education institutions in these countries.

www.enic-naric.net

UNESCO European Centre for Higher Education (UNESCO-CEPES) - UNESCO-CEPES promotes co-operation in higher education in Europe with a particular focus on Central and Eastern Europe. It is a consultative member of the Bologna Follow-Up Group. **www.cepes.ro**

The Bologna Secretariat - The country hosting the forthcoming Bologna ministerial summit provides a Secretariat for the Bologna Process. The Secretariat has administrative and operational responsibility for the next ministerial conference. It carries out secretarial functions for the Bologna Follow-Up Group and Board. **www.bologna-bergen2005.no**

Action line 1

Adoption of a system of easily readable and comparable degrees

Introduction

The establishment of readable and comparable degrees across Europe underpins many of the Bologna Process reforms. The improved flexibility and transparency provided by degrees that can be easily read and compared with qualifications across Europe enables students and teachers to have their qualifications recognised more widely. This facilitates freedom of movement around a more transparent EHEA. The readability of European degrees will enhance the attractiveness of European HE to the rest of the world.

Recent developments

The Bologna Process sees an important role for the Diploma Supplement in realising this action line. The Berlin ministerial summit in 2003 called for *"every student graduating as from 2005 to receive the Diploma Supplement automatically and free of charge"*. The Diploma Supplement is a document to be issued to students by their higher education institutions on graduation. It is widely used in many Bologna signatory countries and aims to describe the qualification received in a standard format that is easy to understand and easy to compare. It also describes the content of the qualification and the structure of the higher education system within which it was issued. It is not a curriculum vitae and simply acts as a supplementary explanation of the qualification certificate rather than a substitute for it. The European Commission has recently published a proposal for a 'Europass', an online document providing a single framework for the recognition of qualifications and competences across Europe incorporating the Diploma Supplement and other existing transparency instruments.

The Bologna Process requires all signatory countries to ratify the "Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region". It was formulated by the Council of Europe in Lisbon and is hence usually referred to as the 'Lisbon Convention'. The Convention states that no discrimination should be made against holders of qualifications across European countries. Access to further HE study and use of an academic title should be granted to holders of qualifications on the same grounds as citizens from the country where recognition is sought. It places responsibility to demonstrate that an application does not meet the requirements for further higher education study with the institution making the assessment. The Convention also encourages all signatory countries to issue the Diploma Supplement to their graduating students.

UK response

The UK ratified the Lisbon Convention in 2003. UK HEIs are engaging with the requirements of the Diploma Supplement and a number of institutions have already introduced it. Progress in introducing the Diploma Supplement has been affected by data collection and cost issues but there is growing acceptance that students graduating in the UK should be able to benefit from the enhanced recognition and mobility that the Diploma Supplement brings. The Transcript element of the Progress File is similar to the Diploma Supplement apart from a small number of data fields and the sequence for the information it provides. The UK HE Europe Unit, in collaboration with other stakeholders, is advising the sector on issuing the Diploma Supplement and UK institutions are encouraged to proceed with issuing the Diploma Supplement as soon as possible. A national description of the higher education systems in England, Wales and Northern Ireland is available to help HEIs issuing the Diploma Supplement. Scotland is producing a separate national description. Both descriptions are available on the UK NARIC's website. The UK Socrates-Erasmus Council (UKSEC) supports institutions in using funds under the Organisation of Mobility heading in their Erasmus grant to introduce the Diploma Supplement and through administering the UK Bologna Promoters who advise institutions on issuing the Diploma Supplement (see UKSEC website below for details).

The European Commission awards the Diploma Supplement Label to institutions issuing the Diploma Supplement correctly.

Differences in the length of Masters qualifications across Europe have the potential to create recognition difficulties for UK Masters graduates. While many European countries offer Masters programmes lasting two years, in the UK and some other Bologna signatory countries one-year Masters degrees are common. The UK also operates some integrated four-year courses leading directly to a Masters qualification (for example, MEng, MSci, MPhys, MChem), and is not alone in offering this kind of course. The Bologna Process seminar on Master-level Degrees in Helsinki, Finland, in 2003 recommended that there should continue to be flexibility in the definition of second-cycle/Masters programmes and that these should be defined in ECTS terms as programmes from 60 ECTS credits to 120 (i.e. one academic year to two academic years). The requirements for the Erasmus-Mundus Programme for joint Masters programmes reflect the Helsinki recommendation (i.e. 60-120 ECTS credits). Those UK institutions which are currently using ECTS for their Masters Programmes and which have Masters lasting for one calendar year or, in some cases, slightly longer, tend to use 90 ECTS credits.

The UK approach to study programmes focuses on learning outcomes and the UK's Bologna seminar on the topic in Edinburgh in July 2004 recognised the primacy of learning outcomes. It is important that all those involved in the Bologna Process should recognise that the process allows for continued flexibility both at first cycle and second cycle level and that this flexibility is particularly valuable for the diversity of students and learning pathways which are developing.

Further information

UK HE Europe Notes E/04/10, E/04/14 and E/04/18 on the Diploma Supplement and E/04/17 on the Masters degree: www.europeunit.ac.uk

European Commission Diploma Supplement guidelines:
www.europa.eu.int/comm/education/policies/rec_qual/recognition/diploma_en.html

European Commission Diploma Supplement Label:
www.europa.eu.int/comm/education/programmes/socrates/ects/guide_en.pdf

Diploma Supplement national description for England, Wales and Northern Ireland:
www.naric.org.uk/ds.asp

The Lisbon Convention: www.conventions.coe.int/Treaty/en/Treaties/Html/165.htm

UK Bologna seminar on 'Using Learning Outcomes': www.bologna-bergen2005.no

Europass:
www.europa.eu.int/comm/education/programmes/europass/index_en.html

UK Socrates-Erasmus Council, including list of UK Bologna Promoters:
www.erasmus.ac.uk



Heriot Watt University, Edinburgh, hosted the UK's Bologna seminar on 'Using Learning Outcomes'.
Photographer: Laurence Winram

Action Line 2

Adoption of a system essentially based on two cycles

including qualifications frameworks

Introduction

The Bologna Process requires the adoption of a system based on two cycles (undergraduate and graduate). The Bologna Declaration stated that the first cycle should last a minimum of three years while no length is specified for the second cycle Masters qualification. This has required extensive restructuring of higher education systems in many European countries. Ministers from Bologna signatory countries have recognised the value of qualifications frameworks in making Europe's HE qualifications more transparent and compatible with one another. Qualifications frameworks at national and at European level have the potential to make mobility and qualification recognition across Europe easier.

Recent developments

Following progress across Europe in establishing a two-cycle system, Ministers at the Berlin ministerial summit in 2003 called on the Bologna Follow-Up Group to explore how to link shorter HE programmes, such as the UK's Foundation degrees, to the first cycle.

Also in Berlin, Ministers called on signatory countries to establish national qualifications frameworks by 2005, "*which should seek to describe qualifications in terms of workload, level, learning outcomes, competences and profile*". At European level, the summit called for the elaboration of "*an overarching framework of qualifications for Europe*". A sub-group of the Bologna Follow-Up Group is responding to the call and has agreed that the so-called 'Dublin Descriptors' – generic qualifications descriptors for Europe – should be included in such a framework. Key issues which are being addressed concern the scope of such a framework and whether credit should be included. The group will make recommendations to the ministerial summit in Bergen in May 2005.

Work is also underway on qualifications frameworks within the so-called Bruges-Copenhagen Process on enhanced European cooperation in vocational education and training (VET). Launched in 2002 in Copenhagen, the Bruges-Copenhagen Process includes 31 European countries and aims to introduce common reference levels for VET in Europe. A follow-up ministerial summit in Maastricht in 2004 called for the introduction of a credit system (ECVET) for vocational education and training. The European Commission has recently set up an 'Expert Group on a European Qualifications Framework' to bring together the initiatives in both the Bologna and Bruges-Copenhagen Processes and "*produce a blueprint of a European qualifications framework*".

UK response

Unlike many Bologna countries at the signing of the Bologna Declaration in 1999, the UK already had a two-cycle system in place. The three-year Bachelor degree followed by the one or two-year Masters results in a minimum of four years study. In Scotland, the four-year Bachelor's degree with Honours is followed by the one-year Masters.

The UK has several qualifications frameworks in place. There is a Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (EWNII), which meets the criteria set out in the Berlin Communiqué. The comprehensive Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) incorporates all Scottish qualifications, and Wales is currently embedding a lifelong learning Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales (CQFW). The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland does not incorporate all HE study or credit.

The UK is keen that any framework for qualifications for Europe should be overarching and flexible and should allow national qualifications frameworks to articulate with one another. If credit is to be included, it should be allocated on the basis of the learning outcomes of periods of study alongside notional learning effort or hours studied, to ensure that the programmes concerned can feasibly be studied. The role of levels and level descriptors in the European Credit Transfer System needs clarification. Activity on qualifications frameworks within the Bologna and Bruges-Copenhagen Processes should complement and not duplicate one another. For current information on the debate on qualifications frameworks please contact the UK HE Europe Unit at: info@europeunit.ac.uk.

Further information

The Bruges-Copenhagen Process:

www.europa.eu.int/comm/education/copenhagen/index_en.html

Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SHEFC): www.shefc.ac.uk

Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales (CQFW):

www.elwa.ac.uk/elwaweb/elwa.aspx?pageid=1612

Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England:

www.qaa.ac.uk/public/heguide/guide.htm#22

Action Line 3

Establishment of a system of credits

Introduction

At the outset the Bologna Process saw the introduction of a European credit system as contributing to the removal of obstacles to academic mobility and facilitating mutual recognition of qualifications and periods of study. Credit is seen to have an important role to play in curriculum design and in validating a range of learning in an era of lifelong learning. The European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) was introduced by the European Commission to facilitate recognition of exchange programmes under its Socrates-Erasmus programme. ECTS is used widely across Bologna signatory countries as a mechanism for both transfer and accumulation.

Recent developments

The Berlin ministerial summit in 2003 called for the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) to be used as a transfer and accumulation system across Europe. Ongoing discussions are taking place in the Bologna Follow-Up Group working group on qualifications frameworks and in other decision-making forums over whether a framework of qualifications for Europe should incorporate credit and how credit should be allocated to periods of study.

UK response

In the UK, credit is used universally in Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland. Scotland and Wales have credit transfer and accumulation systems in place within integrated credit and qualifications frameworks: the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) and the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales (CQFW). Many institutions in England use credit for transferring between programmes or institutions, and use ECTS for transfers within Europe. Some consortia of English institutions use credit for accumulation. The report of the 'Measuring and Recording Student Achievement Scoping Group', chaired by Professor Burgess, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Leicester, was published in November 2004 and called for efforts to be made to develop a common higher education credit system for England, Wales and Northern Ireland. A new steering group representing higher education institutions and HE stakeholders has been convened to consider how the recommendations can be taken forward.

There are issues to be resolved concerning the practical implications of ECTS developing into an accumulation system for Europe. The UK favours the use of credit in the European higher education area to take account of the learning outcomes of periods of study alongside notional workload or 'hours studied'. This will be important in the debate on whether to incorporate credit into a qualifications framework for Europe. For up-to-date information on the ongoing discussions on credit in the Bologna Process please contact: info@europeunit.ac.uk.

The European Commission awards the ECTS Label to institutions applying ECTS correctly. The Label raises the profile of the institution as a transparent and reliable partner in European and international cooperation. UK Bologna Promoters support institutions in using ECTS.

Further information

Report of the 'Measuring and Recording Student Achievement Scoping Group': bookshop.universitiesuk.ac.uk/downloads/measuringachievement.pdf

European Commission ECTS Users' Guide: www.europa.eu.int/socra/education/programmes/socrates/usersg_en.html

UK National Academic Recognition Information Centre (UK NARIC) – www.naric.org.uk

ENIC-NARIC networks: www.enic-naric.net

Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF): www.scqf.org.uk

Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales (CQFW): www.elwa.ac.uk/elwaweb/elwa.aspx?pageid=1612

Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England: www.qaa.ac.uk/public/heguide/guide.htm#22

UK Bologna Promoters and the ECTS Label: www.erasmus.ac.uk

Action Line 4

Promotion of mobility

Introduction

The "promotion of mobility by overcoming obstacles to the effective exercise of free movement" was one of the founding objectives of the Bologna Process featuring in the 1999 Bologna Declaration. Ministers at the Berlin ministerial summit in 2003 identified mobility of students, academics and administrative staff as "*the basis for establishing the EHEA*". Bologna Process reforms, such as greater use of credit, the development of qualifications frameworks and European quality assurance all facilitate mobility in Europe by creating a higher education area built on trust and high quality HE.

Recent developments

The European Union administers a series of mobility programmes to encourage students and scholars from all over Europe to spend time in the higher education institutions of other EU countries and beyond. The European Commission has recently published proposals for a new Integrated Action Programme for Lifelong Learning. The programme will run from 2007-2013 replacing the current EU Socrates programme. The proposal includes targets for substantial increases in teacher and student mobility with the goal of reaching three million participants by 2010.

The Bologna Process is also considering funding of mobile students, notably at a Bologna seminar in Nordwijk on 'Designing Policies for Mobile Students' in October 2004. It is likely that work in this area will continue following the 2005 ministerial summit in Bergen.

UK response

The UK welcomes efforts to make student and staff mobility in Europe easier. Greater mobility brings increased career opportunities for students and teachers in the European employment market. The UK HE Europe Unit has gathered views from the UK sector on the European Commission's proposal for a new mobility programme. Stakeholders from across the UK have welcomed the proposed increase in funding for the programmes. Decentralisation of funding and administration procedures to national agencies is also wholly desirable. Many HEIs have stressed the importance of the quality of the mobility experience, alongside the need to increase participation. It is important that future mobility programmes are adapted to a new student cohort of lifelong learners, part-time and mature students and that they maintain flexibility in length of student time spent abroad. For up-to-date information on the proposed new Integrated Action Programme please contact: info@europeunit.ac.uk

Further information

The European Union's Lisbon strategy:

www.europa.eu.int/comm/lisbon_strategy/index_en.html

European Commission proposals for the new generation of education and training programmes:

www.europa.eu.int/comm/education/doc/official/keydoc/2004/newprog_en.pdf

Europe Note number E/04/15 on the 'New generation of European Commission education and training programmes': www.europeunit.ac.uk

UK Socrates Erasmus Council (UKSEC): www.erasmus.ac.uk

Bologna seminar on 'Designing Policies for Mobile Students', October 2004:

http://www.bologna-bergen2005.no/EN/Bol_sem/Seminars/041010-12Noordwijk-Nederlands.HTM



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Action Line 5

Promotion of European cooperation in quality assurance

Introduction

Quality assurance plays a central role in achieving the Bologna objective to enhance the international competitiveness of European higher education. European cooperation in quality assurance will make it easier to compare qualifications across Europe and will facilitate mobility. All Bologna ministerial communiqués have made reference to quality assurance.

Recent developments

Quality assurance was made a priority at the Berlin ministerial summit in 2003. Ministers stressed that primary responsibility for quality assurance lies with each higher education institution. They set down requirements for national quality assurance systems which are broadly compatible with arrangements across the UK.

Also in Berlin, Ministers gave a mandate to the European Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), now an association for exchange of practice in quality assurance. The UK's Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) is represented on the Board of ENQA and plays an active role in European debates on quality assurance. ENQA was asked to:

"develop an agreed set of standards, procedures and guidelines on quality assurance, to explore ways of ensuring an adequate peer review system for quality assurance and/or accreditation agencies or bodies, and to report back through the Follow-up Group to Ministers in 2005."

In doing this, ENQA was asked to cooperate with European representatives of higher education institutions and students: European University Association (EUA); European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE); and the National Unions of Students in Europe (ESIB). ENQA will report back findings to Ministers at the next ministerial summit in Bergen in May 2005. For up-to-date information on the ENQA discussions, please contact: comms@qaa.ac.uk.

The European Commission participates in debates on quality assurance and in October 2004 it published a 'Proposal for a Recommendation' on further cooperation in EU HE quality assurance. Following an earlier proposal in 1998, the Recommendation sets out five steps to achieve mutual recognition of quality assurance systems in Europe: a requirement for internal quality assurance mechanisms; a common set of standards, procedures and guidelines; a European register of quality assurance and accreditation agencies; freedom for higher education institutions to choose their quality assurance or accreditation agencies with a requirement for EU member states to accept the judgements of any agency on the register for purposes of licensing or funding. The European Commission's Recommendation will contribute to Bologna Process debates on quality assurance.

There have also been developments in the area of professional accreditation. In some continental countries the licence to practise is included in the award of the HE qualification. The European Commission has recently pledged funding for a project to develop a pan-European accreditation process for engineering. The European Consortium for Accreditation (ECA) is an association of twelve countries willing to accredit professional qualifications often leading to both the award of the degree and licence to practise professionally. The objective of ECA is the achievement of mutual recognition of accreditation decisions among its member countries.

The European Commission-funded project, Tuning Educational Structures in Europe, is contributing to the Bologna Process by identifying generic and subject specific competences. The various phases of the Tuning project include participants from around 130 HEIs across Europe and play an important role in developing mutual trust and understanding of qualifications across Europe.

UK response

The UK hopes that developments at European level will have a positive impact on quality assurance developments in the UK. While quality assurance arrangements in many European countries are based on subject review and accreditation, the UK would be opposed to the development of a single, intrusive or bureaucratic quality assurance agency at European level. There is a need to increase understanding of the benefits of the UK approach of institution-led quality assurance with a clear focus on quality enhancement. The Scottish HE sector is implementing the 'enhancement-led institutional review (ELIR)' approach to quality assurance. The UK supports work in the EUA's Quality Culture Project, which contains useful recommendations for European quality assurance. The project focuses on embedding systematic and coherent quality culture in HEIs in line with Bologna objectives. The project findings have a helpful emphasis on the improvement and development of quality.

In the UK an academic qualification is followed by participation in structured industrial training programmes or supervised professional practice in employment, resulting in membership of professional and statutory bodies. Professional bodies carry out subject accreditation in as light a form as possible. There is a need to explain the UK approach to professional accreditation in order to avoid recognition difficulties in the future.

The European Commission has an important contribution to make to Bologna Process debates on quality assurance; however, more detail is needed on the practicalities of the Commission's draft Recommendation's proposal to allow HEIs the ability to choose a QA body from a European register. The UK HE sector is currently considering the details of the Commission's Recommendation with the Government. Developments in quality assurance in Europe should continue to be led by institutions and key stakeholders in higher education. For up-to-date information on the Commission's Recommendation please contact: info@europeunit.ac.uk.

Further information

European Commission's Proposal for a Recommendation on quality assurance:
europa.eu.int/eur-lex/pri/en/lip/latest/doc/2004/com2004_0642en01.doc.

European Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA):
www.enqa.net

EUA Quality Culture Project: www.eua.be/eua/en/projects_quality.jsp

Europe Note E/04/04 on the 'Berlin ministerial summit on the Bologna Process':
www.europeunit.ac.uk

Joint Quality Initiative (JQI): www.jointquality.org

Quality Assurance Agency: www.qaa.ac.uk

Tuning Educational Structures in Europe Project:
www.relint.deusto.es/TUNINGProject/index_phase2.htm

Action Line 6

Promotion of the European dimension in higher education

Introduction

Since its launch in 1999 the Bologna Process has called for curriculum development, inter-institutional cooperation, mobility schemes and integrated programmes of study, training and research to add a European dimension to higher education in signatory countries.

Recent developments

At the Berlin summit in 2003, Ministers agreed at national level to "*remove obstacles to the establishment and recognition of such degrees (joint degrees), and to support the development and adequate quality assurance of integrated curricula leading to joint degrees*".

The Council of Europe and UNESCO have recently approved a Recommendation on the Recognition of Joint Degrees as an amendment to the Lisbon Recognition Convention. The Recommendation was discussed at the 2004 Bologna seminar on Joint Degrees in Stockholm and is likely to be endorsed by Ministers at the forthcoming summit in Bergen in 2005.

The European University Association (EUA) 'Joint Masters Project' explored the operation of joint degree programmes. The more recent EUA 'Doctoral Programmes Project' is promoting cooperation and mutual learning in the development of joint doctoral programmes at European level.

The European Commission's Erasmus Mundus mobility programme offers students and scholars from third countries scholarships to study Masters courses offered by consortia of universities in three or more different European countries.

UK response

Joint degrees, based on carefully-designed joint study programmes, have the potential to provide students and staff with the opportunity to acquire language skills and cultural maturity. A flexible approach to the design, length and criteria for joint programmes is important to ensure that students from a range of study paths can participate in them. The UK HE Europe Unit is, however, aware of plans to reform university charters to allow for award of joint degrees. The UK's Quality Assurance Agency has also recently produced a second edition of a 'Code of Practice for Collaborative Provision'.

Further information

Recommendations from Bologna seminar on Joint Degrees in Stockholm:
www.bologna-berlin2003.de/pdf/Stockholm_results.pdf

Recommendation on the Recognition of Joint Degrees:
www.bologna-bergen2005.no/EN/Other/Lisbon_Recdoc/040609_Recommendation_joint_degrees.pdf

Erasmus Mundus programme:
europa.eu.int/comm/education/programmes/mundus/index_en.html

EUA Joint Master's Project: www.eua.be/eua/en/projects_joint.jsp

EUA Doctoral Programmes Project:
www.eua.be/eua/en/Doctoral_Programmes.jsp

QAA Code of Practice for Collaborative Provision:
www.qaa.ac.uk/public/COP/cprovis/contents.htm

Action Line 7

Lifelong learning

Introduction

The Bologna Process has identified lifelong learning as an essential element of the European Higher Education Area and its expansion has become one of the guiding principles for the development of all education and training policy in Europe. It affects all aspects of European higher education - mobility programmes, eLearning, research, vocational education, recognition of qualifications - and is a fundamental objective of the Bruges-Copenhagen Process (see below). It has been identified by the European Union (EU) as having a central role to play in achieving the EU's goal of the Lisbon Strategy "*to make the EU the world's most competitive and dynamic knowledge economy in the world*".

Recent developments

At the 2003 Berlin summit Ministers called for qualifications frameworks to "*encompass the wide range of flexible learning paths, opportunities and techniques*" and to make appropriate use of the ECTS credits.

The European Commission's so-called Bruges-Copenhagen Process is working on enhanced European cooperation in vocational education and training (VET). The Bruges-Copenhagen Process is aiming to establish a credit system for VET and common reference levels. The European Union's proposals for education and training programmes to replace the current Socrates programme include plans for an integrated framework geared towards lifelong learning.

UK response

The UK welcomes lifelong learning as an essential part of the Bologna Process. It views this form of learning as a way of increasing competitiveness, and as an instrument of social cohesion. The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) and the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales (CQFW) support lifelong learning by incorporating all levels of education into single qualifications frameworks. The Scottish Executive has also published a Lifelong Learning Strategy. The recent report of the Measuring and Recording Student Achievement Group, chaired by Professor Robert Burgess, recommends that a national credit system be developed in England in the interests of lifelong learning and as an instrument for developing qualifications frameworks.

Constructive developments within the Bruges-Copenhagen Process and the Bologna Process should complement, and not duplicate, one another. Efforts to include vocational education and training in a framework of qualifications for Europe are welcome although a proliferation of levels in such a framework would be undesirable. For up-to-date information on qualifications frameworks and the Bruges-Copenhagen Process please contact: info@europeunit.ac.uk.

Further information

The Bruges-Copenhagen Process:

www.europa.eu.int/comm/education/copenhagen/index_en.html

Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF): www.sqcf.org.uk

Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales (CQFW):

www.elwa.ac.uk/elwaweb/elwa.aspx?pageid=1612

The Burgess report:

www.bookshop.universitiesuk.ac.uk/downloads/measuringachievement.pdf



Jan Figel, European Commissioner for Education,
Culture and Multilingualism
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Action Line 8

Higher education institutions and students

Introduction

Higher education institutions and students have a vital role to play in the Bologna Process and Ministers have called upon them to become involved in forming a diverse and adaptable European Higher Education Area. The European HE umbrella bodies: the European University Association (EUA) and the European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE) provide a presence for institutions in the Bologna Process. The National Union of Students in Europe (ESIB) represents students in Europe and plays an active role in Bologna Process debates. These umbrella organisations are consultative Members of the Bologna Follow-Up Group and Board.

Recent Developments

The Berlin ministerial summit in 2003, building on the Prague Communiqué, recognised that it is *“the active participation of all partners in the Process that will ensure its long-term success”*. And the Bologna Process has acknowledged the necessity for institutions *“to be empowered to take decisions on their internal organisation and administration”*.

The Berlin summit also noted that students are full partners in higher education governance and stressed the need for *“appropriate studying and living conditions for the students”*.

UK response

In the UK, Universities UK, the Standing Conference of Principals and the National Union of Students engage in the Bologna Process through their respective European umbrella organisations. The UK HE sector has established the UK HE Europe Unit to raise awareness of European issues and coordinate UK involvement in Bologna Process debates. Representatives of institutions and students sit on the UK HE Europe Unit’s High Level Policy Forum and officer-led European Coordinating Group to inform the policy positioning of the Unit. At European level, it is vital that representatives of higher education institutions and students are full partners in the Bologna Process. It is therefore essential that the EUA, EURASHE and ESIB participate alongside government representatives in the Bologna decision-making forums, in particular at the ministerial summit in Bergen in May 2005. The full report of the EUA’s Trends IV survey on institutions’ perspectives of ‘Bologna’ has an invaluable role to play in the official Bologna Process stocktaking exercise, which assesses how the Bologna Process is progressing towards meeting its objectives.

Further information

European University Association: www.eua.be

European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE):
www.eurashe.be

National Union of Students in Europe (ESIB): www.esib.org

UK High Level Policy Forum and European Coordinating Group:
www.europeunit.ac.uk/about_us/index.cfm



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Action Line 9

Promoting the attractiveness of the European Higher Education Area

Introduction

One of the founding objectives of the Bologna Process was to enhance the competitiveness of European higher education in a global market. The aim is that the creation of a coherent and transparent European Higher Education Area with compatible and high quality HE systems will make European HE more attractive to the rest of the world.

Recent developments

The European Union's 'Erasmus Mundus' mobility programme was launched in 2004 to strengthen links between EU member States and non-EU countries through the creation of 250 new inter-university Masters courses. It also provides EU-funded scholarships for third country nationals studying in the EU, and for EU nationals studying in non-EU countries.

The Prague ministerial summit opened Bologna Process seminars and conferences to representatives from around the world. And as the Bologna Process expands to 43 Members at the Bergen summit, the European Higher Education Area will be almost double the size of the European Union.

UK response

The UK, which has been consistently successful in attracting international students, has been committed to a strategy of international competitiveness for some time, through the Prime Minister's Initiative (PMI) and other developments. The UK government and devolved administrations have funded the British Council to launch a major five-year world-wide marketing initiative to encourage international students to study in the UK. This campaign includes the branding initiative, EducationUK, designed to help UK HEIs promote themselves.

The Wales International Consortium (WIC) represents all twelve higher education institutions in Wales and is a unique example of an entire sector working strategically together for shared benefit. It actively promotes Wales as a desirable and effective study destination for international students, featuring attractive learning, research and career opportunities and competitive, affordable quality education.

The Bologna Process has the potential to enhance the attractiveness of European HE to the outside world as European HE becomes more structured and comprehensive. It is vital that the UK is fully engaged in the Process to enable it to benefit from the increased competitiveness of the European Higher Education Area. As an increasing number of continental HEIs are offering programmes taught in English, it is also crucial that the UK engages in the creation of the European Higher Education Area to ensure that UK institutions remain active and competitive in the European market.

Further information

Erasmus Mundus programme:

www.europa.eu.int/comm/education/programmes/mundus/index_en.html

Education UK: www.educationuk.org

Wales International Consortium: www.walesinternationalconsortium.com

Action Line 10

Doctoral studies and the synergy between the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and the European Research Area (ERA)

Introduction

The Bologna Process sees research as an integral part of European higher education. Meeting in Berlin in 2003, higher education Ministers considered it necessary to include the doctoral level as the third cycle in the Bologna Process. In doing so, the link between the Bologna Process to create the European Higher Education Area and the European Union's Lisbon objective to develop a European Research Area (ERA) was strengthened.

Recent Developments

In 2003 the European Commission published a Communication on 'Universities in the Europe of Knowledge' on the role of universities in achieving the EU's Lisbon goal to become "*the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world by 2010*". In a further Communication the Commission also considered the importance of professional career development for researchers in Europe.

The European University Association (EUA) has recently launched a Doctoral Programmes Project to examine the development of existing doctoral courses. Several UK institutions are involved in the project, which aims to identify essential conditions in the development of such programmes in Europe and to promote cooperation. It identifies good practice and compares standards. The project findings will be presented at a Bologna Process seminar in Salzburg in February 2005 when recommendations will be made for the ministerial summit in May 2005.

UK response

The incorporation of doctoral level qualifications into the Bologna Process has the potential to enhance doctoral level study in the UK by creating opportunities for mobility and collaboration for staff and students. It also highlights the importance of university-based research in the European Higher Education Area and in the EU's European Research Area. The UK calls for Bologna requirements to remain flexible regarding the length and structure of the third cycle to accommodate the diversity of doctoral level qualifications in Europe. Teacher-training should be an optional element of doctoral-level qualifications. Ahead of the EUA Salzburg seminar this action line remains work in progress. For further information on doctoral level qualifications within the Bologna Process contact: info@europeunit.ac.uk.

Further information

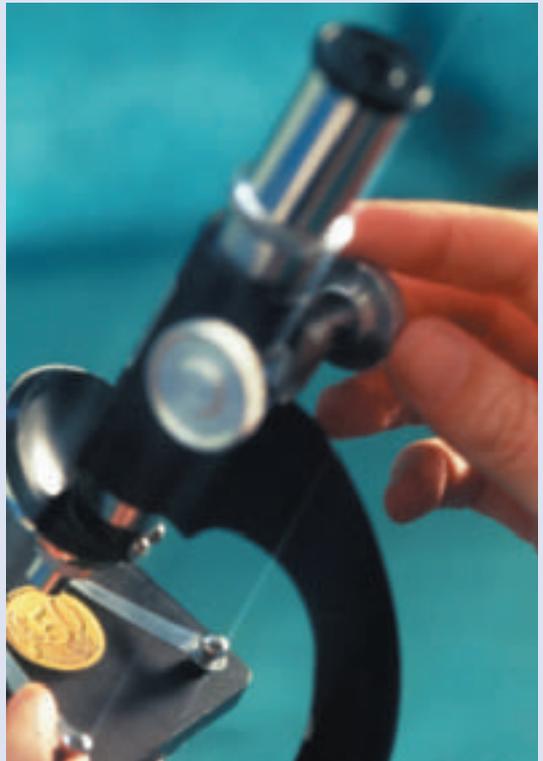
European Commission Communication on 'Universities in the Europe of Knowledge', 2003:

www.europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/com/cnc/2003/com2003_0058en01.pdf

European Research Area: www.europa.eu.int/comm/research/era/index_en.html

European Commission Conference on 'The Europe of Knowledge 2020' in Liège, 2004:

www.europa.eu.int/comm/research/conferences2004/univ/background_en.html



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Glossary

AUT	Association of University Teachers (www.aut.org.uk)
BFUG	Bologna Follow-Up Group (www.bologna-bergen2005.no)
CoE	Council of Europe (www.coe.int/portalT.asp)
CQFW	Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales (www.elwa.org.uk)
DTI	Department of Trade and Industry (http://www.dti.gov.uk)
DfES	Department for Education and Skills (http://www.dfes.gov.uk)
DS	Diploma Supplement
EC	European Commission (www.europa.eu.int/comm/index_en.htm)
ECTS	European Credit Transfer and accumulation System (www.europa.eu.int/comm/education/programmes/socrates/ects_en.html)
EC (UK)	Engineering Council UK (www.engc.org.uk)
ECVET	European Credit Transfer System for Vocational Education and Training
ENIC-NARIC	National Recognition Information Centres (www.enic-naric.net)
EHEA	European Higher Education Area
ENQA	European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (formerly 'Network') (www.enqa.net)
ERA	European Research Area
ERC	European Research Council
ESIB	National Unions of Students in Europe (www.esib.org)
EU	European Union (www.europa.int)
EUA	European University Association (www.eua.be)
EURASHE	European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (www.eurashe.be)
EWNI	England, Wales and Northern Ireland
FP	EU Framework Programme (for research)
FP6	Sixth Framework Programme (www.europa.eu.int/comm/research/fp6/index_en.html)
FP7	Seventh Framework Programme
GATS	General Agreement on Trade in Services

HEFCE	The Higher Education Funding Council for England (www.hefce.ac.uk)
HEFCW	Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (www.hefcw.ac.uk)
HE	Higher education
HEI	Higher education institution
HEURO	Association of UK Higher Education European Officers (http://www.heuro.org/)
HEW	Higher Education Wales (www.hew.ac.uk)
JQI	Joint Quality Initiative (www.jointquality.org)
NAFHE	University and College Lecturers' Union (www.natfhe.org.uk)
NUS	National Union of Students (www.nusonline.co.uk)
OMC	Open Method of Coordination
OST	Office of Science and Technology (www.ost.gov.uk)
QAA	The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (www.qaa.ac.uk)
R&D	Research and Development
RAE	Research Assessment Exercise (www.rae.ac.uk)
SCOP	Standing Conference of Principals (www.scop.ac.uk)
SCQF	Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (www.scqf.org.uk)
SHEFC	The Scottish Higher Education Funding Council (www.shefc.ac.uk)
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (www.unesco.org)
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
CEPES	European Centre for Higher Education (www.cepes.ro)
UK NARIC	The UK National Academic Recognition Information Centre (www.naric.org.uk)
UKRO	UK Research Office (www.ukro.ac.uk)
UKSEC	UK Socrates Erasmus Council (www.erasmus.ac.uk)
UUK	Universities UK (www.universitiesuk.ac.uk)
US	Universities Scotland (www.universities-scotland.ac.uk)
WIC	Wales International Consortium (www.walesinternationalconsortium.com)
WTO	World Trade Organisation (www.wto.org)

The UK HE Europe Unit

The UK HE Europe Unit is a sector-wide initiative aiming to strengthen the position of the UK HE sector in EU and Bologna Process policy-making forums. The Unit has three primary objectives. First, it acts as a central observatory of European higher education and major research issues and informs all HEIs and stakeholders accordingly. Second, it seeks to coordinate UK involvement in European initiatives and policy debates. Third, where possible, it produces collective UK statements in key areas of EU policy, lobbying to support them as appropriate.

The UK HE Europe Unit is jointly funded by Universities UK and the three higher education funding councils for England, Scotland and Wales and is supported by the Standing Conference of Principals (SCOP) and the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA). The Unit works closely with the Department for Education and Skills, the Scottish Executive and the Welsh Assembly Government. The Department for Employment and Learning in Northern Ireland is also kept informed of the Unit's activities. The Unit is supported by a large number of UK higher education organisations, including the British Council, the Association of UK HE European Officers (HEURO), the UK Research Office (UKRO), the British Council, the UK Socrates-Erasmus Council, the British Academy, the University and College Lecturers' Union (NAFTHU), the Association of University

Teachers (AUT) and the National Union of Students (NUS).

A High Level Policy Forum (HLPF) and an officer-led European Coordinating Group (ECG) comprising representatives from key HE sector organisations inform the policy positioning of the UK HE Europe Unit.

For further information on the UK HE Europe Unit or the issues raised in this booklet please contact:

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Visit the UK HE Europe Unit website at www.europeunit.ac.uk. The site is updated regularly and contains all Unit publications including Europe Notes and monthly and weekly European newsletters.

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