JOINT MASTER DEGREES

1. CONDITIONS RELATING TO THE DESIGN OF THE JOINT MASTER

A JMD must be fully developed at the time of the application and be ready to run for three consecutive editions as from the second academic year following the application. The first year will be a preparatory and promotion (awareness-raising) year when the programme will be advertised and the first intake of students selected. JMDs must dispose of fully joint (common) procedures for the students’ admission requirements, the teaching/training activities, the quality assurance mechanisms, the students’ examination and performance evaluation, consortium administrative and financial management, the nature/scope of services offered to the students (e.g. language courses, visa support), etc. All students must be covered by a health and insurance scheme chosen by the consortium. This scheme must respect the minimum JMD requirements as defined in the respective guidelines available on the Executive Agency website.

These elements are crucial in demonstrating genuine joint integration of a JMD course and its implementing consortium. It is furthermore expected that the applicant provides a draft Consortium Agreement at application stage which covers these and other important items in a clear and transparent manner. The existence of an up-to-date, comprehensive, and robust Consortium Agreement is a sign of readiness of the partners and maturity of the application in view of a successful JMD implementation phase.

In addition, applicants should note that the process of accreditation of a JMD course and the recognition of diplomas within the consortium can be a long-lasting process and must have been completed at JMD application stage (i.e. before the preparatory year and the first JMD student intake). Programme-country HEIs acting as full partners in the consortium must be degree-awarding institutions with the capacity to issue either a joint or a multiple degree (at least a double degree) for JMD graduates. Consortia must also ensure that all graduated students are provided with a Joint Diploma Supplement at the end of their study period, covering the entire content of the Master programme.

The JMD study programme must be designed in a way that all students are in a position to carry out part of their study/training/research activities in two different Programme countries. Each of these periods must correspond to at least 20 ECTS for 60 ECTS Master programmes, and 30 ECTS for longer programmes.

The JMD consortium will need to design joint promotion and awareness-raising activities in order to ensure the worldwide visibility of the joint study programme as well as of the Erasmus+ scholarship scheme. These promotion and awareness-raising activities will necessarily include the development of an integrated and comprehensive course website (in English, as well as in the main teaching language if different) prior to their first scholarship application round, providing all the necessary information on the JMD for students and future employers. Visibility will be supported through the Commission and Executive Agency websites, via National Agencies and EU Delegations. Guidelines on JMD websites can be found on the Executive Agency website.

2. CONDITIONS RELATING TO MASTER STUDENTS

Master students wishing to enrol in a JMD must have previously obtained a first higher education degree or demonstrate a recognised equivalent level of learning according to national legislation and practices. Each JMD consortium will be responsible for defining its specific students’ application procedure and selection criteria in accordance with the requirements and guidelines available on the Executive Agency website.

Erasmus+ JMD student scholarships can be offered to students from any region of the world taking geographical balance into account – i.e. no more than 3 candidates from the same country (with the same nationality) should be awarded a JMD scholarship during the same intake. JMD consortia will also be encouraged to enrol self-funded students representing approximately 25% of the Erasmus+ scholarship holders.

Student scholarship candidates who have already benefited from a JMD scholarship or from an Erasmus Mundus Master Course scholarship are not eligible for another scholarship in the framework of a JMD programme. JMD student scholarships are awarded for a student’s participation in the complete JMD programme. Scholarship holders cannot transfer university credits from course taken prior to their enrolment in their JMD for the purpose of reducing their mandatory activities in the Joint programme. Furthermore, JMD scholarship holders cannot at the same time be beneficiaries of a grant for student or staff mobility in the framework of higher education credit mobility projects, and vice versa.

31 While this condition must necessarily be fulfilled at the time of enrolment, JMD consortia may decide to accept scholarship applications from students in the last year of their first higher education degree.
32 Self-funded students are either self-paying students or students who have been awarded a scholarship from a another scheme.
In order to guarantee full transparency in the JMD implementation rules, as well as to define the rights and responsibilities of enrolled students towards the JMD consortia, both parties (i.e. accepted students and JMD consortia) will have to sign a Student Agreement (see model on the Executive Agency website) prior to the student’s enrolment in the JMD. This Student Agreement will cover all the academic, financial, administrative, behavioural, etc. aspects related to the JMD implementation and, for the scholarship holders, the scholarship management. It should include performance indicators for the successful acquisition of minimum ECTS credits (and the consequences in case of failure to acquire them), information about the services provided to the student, as well as details related to health/social security, mobility requirements, and thesis/exam/graduation rules, etc. For transparency reasons, the Student Agreement template must be published on the JMD website.

3. Conditions relating to monitoring and quality assurance

In order to effectively monitor the implementation of JMD courses, the beneficiary consortia will need to apply a number of monitoring and Quality Assurance (QA) mechanisms:

- definition of a joint QA plan with common evaluation methods and criteria, agreed implementation timetable/milestones and follow-up actions. These QA mechanisms will need to be embedded in the JMD project design at application submission stage, notably internal and external evaluation exercises; feedback on indicators, etc. QA findings and conclusions drawn will need to be reported by the consortium in their regular reporting to the Executive Agency;
- submission of regular progress reports (some of which will condition the payment of the next grant instalments);
- quantitative and qualitative monitoring of the student mobility and performance (in terms of activities implemented, ECTS credits acquired and degree awarded) through the Executive Agency online Mobility Tool (EMT);
- liaison and cooperation (where applicable and expected) with the EM Alumni Association (EMA);
- joint meetings of the participating HEIs, students’ representatives, Executive Agency Programme Officer(s), staff of the National Agencies concerned and, when needed, external experts; at least two of these meetings will have to be organised by the JMD consortium during the period covered by the grant agreement;
- appraisal reports by the enrolled students through the Executive Agency online Mobility Tool (EMT);
- participation in thematic cluster meetings organised by the Commission, the National Agencies of the Executive Agency to support exchange of good practice and mutual learning.

a. Selection procedure

The main objective of the JMD programme is to attract, select, and fund excellence; this should be understood both in terms of academic quality of the main actors (full partners and JMD Master students), as well as in terms of the implementation capacity of the consortia which are expected to carry out an integrated international study programme with students from Programme and Partner Countries. The main aim of the selection procedure for JMD projects will therefore focus on selecting excellent projects offering enhanced employment prospects to graduates. In order to be able to identify and concentrate on the best proposals in a highly competitive selection, a three-step quality peer review will be applied.

Step 1: In this first step, independent academic experts will assess the answers provided by the applicant consortium to the first award criterion (i.e. "Relevance of the project"); see part B) focusing on the pertinence of the proposal in its different aspects, such as: relevance of the content (thematic area) in relation with identified needs; relevance of the joint study programme structure; relevance of the consortia composition in delivering the expected content and providing the expected employability prospects to enrolled students; relevance of Quality Assurance and sustainability plans; etc. Only those proposals that have successfully passed this first assessment will go through the following steps of the selection.

Step 2: Under step 2 the independent academic experts will analyse and evaluate the answers provided to the other award criteria, covering issues such as: detailed curriculum and expected learning outcomes; course/training delivery and evaluation methods; detailed organisation of the JMD in the participating HEIs; the funding model and marketing aspects; etc. This will result in a ranking from which the best proposals (corresponding to a number equivalent to a maximum of 150% of the proposals expected to be selected) will be invited into a phase of structured interviews resulting in the final selection.

Step 3: Consortium representatives of those proposals having passed step 2 will be invited to an interview round with representatives of the Commission/Executive Agency/National Agency in order to discuss jointly any open questions, shortcomings and potential problem fields identified by the experts during step 2. These issues may relate to the content of the JMD as well as to the practical and managerial aspects of the JMD implementation.
At the end of this three-step selection procedure, the Evaluation committee composed of representatives of the Commission and the Executive Agency will analyse the results of the experts' assessment under steps 1 and 2 completed by the responses given by the consortium representatives during the interviews organised under step 3, in order to propose the final list of JMDs to be funded.