

Multilateral Agreement on the Mutual Recognition of Accreditation Results regarding Joint Programmes (MULTRA)

Introduction

The European Consortium for Accreditation in higher education (ECA) was founded in 2003 and consisted originally of 12 accreditation organisations from 8 countries. Since then, ECA was enlarged to 17 organisations from 11 European countries.

ECA acts as a project organisation aiming at mutual recognition of each other's accreditation and quality assurance results. A first step towards reaching this goal was the signing of twelve bilateral mutual recognition agreements between ECA members in 2007. Broadening the scope of mutual recognition is especially important for joint programmes which normally need to undergo several national accreditation procedures. With a multilateral agreement on mutual recognition (MULTRA) in force, however, these multiple procedures can be replaced by one single procedure.

The MULTRA stands for a high level of trust between accreditation agencies. This trust between the partners is based on evidence gained through intense cooperation and observations of procedures amongst the MULTRA agencies.

Agencies that wish to join the MULTRA have to fulfil the requirements of the admission procedure (Annex 1). The Management Group of ECA shall coordinate the admission procedure, organise the observations according to the agreed format (Annex 2), and provide a recommendation on admission to the agencies that are already part of the MULTRA. The agencies that have signed the MULTRA decide on the admission. A new agency is only admitted if all agencies that have signed the MULTRA approve the admission.

Preamble

Aiming to contribute to the internationalisation of higher education and to enhance the mobility of students and graduates in Europe;

with the purpose to simplify the accreditation and recognition of joint programmes and degrees awarded and to provide an efficient way to expand mutual recognition to more European Higher Education Area countries;

with the additional purpose to strengthen the commitment of agencies to collaborate and to reach up to high quality standards

convinced that the multilateral recognition agreement between accreditation organisations enhance transparency in the European Higher Education Area and provide important information on the quality of foreign institutions and programmes for students, higher education institutions and the labour market;

building on the cooperation with ENIC-NARIC centres regarding the recognition of qualifications awarded by joint programmes;

relying on the work of ECA since 2003 to build up mutual trust between the member organisations;

taking into account the already signed bilateral mutual recognition agreements or the positive external evaluation results of the signing agencies;

acknowledging the variety of national higher education systems and accepting the existence of different legal prerequisites for accreditation [and quality assurance] procedures, standards and decisions.

Agreement

The signing accreditation organisations agree to apply the ECA principles for accreditation procedures regarding joint programmes;

and confirm that within their competences they accept the results of the accreditation procedures of the other signing accreditation organisations when accrediting joint programmes;

on the condition that the signing agencies continue to exchange information about their accreditation systems on a regular basis. Substantial changes of the accreditation systems should be communicated without delay.

The signing accreditation organisations agree to give each other access to all relevant documents relating to the accreditation results. All documents must be treated confidentially until they are published.

The terms of the Agreement may be modified at any time upon the consent of all parties. Consensus of all signatory parties is needed for admission of new members. Any of the signatory parties may denounce this agreement by written notification to the other parties at any time. The written notification must include the reasons for and the date of the termination of this agreement.

The agreement is valid for three years. After a re-evaluation of the terms of the agreement it can be extended by consent of all parties.

As a prerequisite to signing this agreement the interested agency must have a valid bilateral mutual recognition agreement with at least one of the signatory parties or must undergo the admission procedure described in Annex 1 based on an observation format (Annex 2).

Signatures

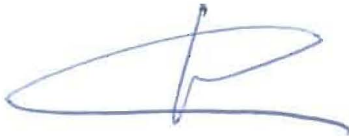
The following undersigning ECA member organisations join this Multilateral Agreement on the Mutual Recognition of Accreditation Results regarding Joint Programmes:




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