

BENCHMARKING METHODOLOGY

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**Introducing Problem Based Learning in Moldova:
Toward Enhancing Students (PBLMD)**

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Benchmarking Methodology

Prepared by: Romeo V. Turcan

Evaluated by: Colin Simpson (UoG)
Jim Keane (UoG)
Ralph Dreher (USIEGEN)
Gesine Haseloff (USIEGEN)
John Reilly (Higher Education Consultant)

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Benchmarking Methodology Template

Each Task Force Team will store all collected data files in the project intranet <https://pblmd-moodle.samf.aau.dk/>. Task Force leaders are to make sure all data files and documents are stored in the project intranet.

1. Institutional fit-for-purpose

This part is concerned with exploring the relationship between internal university structures and study programs, incl., how study programme development and support are integrated throughout the entire university. The cohesion of study programme development and support will be examined at university management, faculty/department, as well as the study board levels. Issues related to the integration of disadvantaged group of students as well as to available physical environment will be explored.

Each Task Force Team will employ this part of the methodology to develop a benchmark understanding of how student-centred teaching and learning at EU partner universities is imbedded into and related to overall institutional structure and later to explore the same relationship, fit-for-purpose at own universities.

NOTE: the questions below are separated into 6 levels; there might be an overlap between the levels. It is important when asking a question to consider its relationship with other levels and impact it might have on other areas within and across the levels.

System level:

- Does the University have power/authority to accredit/validate its own degrees? If so go to section below.
- If not what is the external process?
- What is the legal status of the accrediting body? How is it composed? Does it publish a guide and criteria for accreditation? Is this publicly available? Ask for a copy and include an analysis of key elements in your report.
- Does accreditation happen periodically? Is there a fast track for new degrees/areas of study? How long does the normal process take? Is accreditation institutional or subject based?
- How is it regarded by stakeholders?
- Is there a national system of Quality Assurance? Is it independent of accreditation? What is the legal status of the QA body? How is it composed? Does it publish a code of practice? If so obtain a copy or access and include an analysis of key elements in your report.
- How does the national QA body influence curriculum development and internal quality assurance? How is it regarded by stakeholders?
- Are there national subject benchmarks or equivalent which programmes have to address?¹

¹ In the UK, and probably elsewhere, there are certain guidelines and constraints exercised from outside the HEI. These might be professional bodies (e.g. in the case of Law in England, where any qualifying Law degree has to be validated by the Law Society); government agencies (e.g. the subject benchmark statements provided by HEFCE); or other validating agencies (e.g. EDAMBA etc.). This can be significant because these agencies sometimes dictate the curriculum and the assessment style (e.g. insisting on exams).

- Are there any relevant guidelines or benchmark statements provided by government agencies which constrain or otherwise affect the delivery of programmes? Explain whether these benchmarks refer to the content, delivery or assessment of the programme.
- Which professional bodies have some input into the validation or oversight of the programmes and how are these processes carried out?
- Which external validating agencies are involved in the design of the programmes and how is this achieved?
- What are the arrangements for dual awards or professional recognition?

University Management Level:

- What is the governance, management and organizational structure of the university?
- Is there a University institutional strategy which incorporates a curriculum strategy with a focus on student centred learning or is there a separate curriculum (learning and teaching) strategy? Is there an institutional commitment to innovative learning and teaching, greater use of ITC, a focus on employability, internationalisation of the curriculum? Language acquisition, inter-cultural skills? Obtain or access the documents and include an analysis in your report?
- What is the key university structure/committee responsible for student-centred teaching and learning? What are its terms of reference? What is its membership? How often does it meet? Are there provisions for fast tracking urgent curriculum development? What delegated powers does it have and to which body is it accountable? Does it produce regulations/good practice guides for curriculum proposals? What is the relationship of this body to Faculties/ Schools/ Departments / Colleges in the University?
- Is there a separate committee and/or office for internal quality assurance and enhancement? What are its responsibilities and how is it resourced (number and level of staff full/part-time, academic or administrative)?
- At what level in the University curriculum proposals can be initiated and possibly a definition of the various bodies to be sure that there is a consistent understanding of terms? If necessary, for each university create a Glossary of terms and respective provide definitions.
- What other bodies have an influence on curriculum development and approval e.g. Is there a requirement for a business case for all new programmes? Would the business case have to demonstrate how the proposal fits the University strategic plan? Which committee or senior manager needs to approve the business plan? Would service departments such as e.g. Finance, Estates, Library, Careers, Legal, Ethical expect/require to be consulted?]
- What learning and teaching and assessment approaches are used at the university? What differences are there between and/or within different subject areas/faculties?
- Is there an institutional graduate school? Does it have responsibility for both second and third cycles? What are its terms of reference? How does it relate to other bodies responsible for curriculum approval? [You might want to develop this with more on Doctoral Schools/Programmes]
- What public/published information is available on all aspects of the University curriculum policy and content? Is this available on the web site with open access? The content should be reviewed as part of the benchmarking.

- Do descriptions of programmes and modules contain clear statements of intended learning outcomes? Learning methods, assessment and assessment criteria? Do programme descriptions indicate potential employment routes post-graduation? Who monitors/is responsible for ensuring this?
- Are academic staff required to have a formal 'teaching' qualification? If so what bodies offer/validate the qualification? What formal requirements are there for continuing staff development and training? How is this monitored and assessed? Which body in the University has responsibility for this? Is the University Human resource department engaged in academic staff training and development? What standards are followed in pedagogical training of academics? Are there national common guidelines, pedagogical standards/methodologies to be followed? What training courses are organized for staff teaching skills development?
- How are students represented at the university level? What role do students play in the governance, management, organisation of the University? Note: it is important to understand how the students are appointed/ nominated to the relevant bodies and how they report back to their constituency.
- What KPIs are typically used at university level in relation to resourcing teaching and learning (such as, SSRs (staff student ratio); spend per student on library resources; time allowances for teaching and assessment; average class size etc)?
- What is the role of the students' union in the student-centred teaching and learning?
- How is student-centred teaching and learning supported by the university's mission statement?
- How, if at all, is student-centred teaching and learning promoted throughout the university?
- What is the role of continuous professional development (CPD) in supporting student-centred teaching and learning?
- What financial or administrative support is provided at university level to support student-centred teaching and learning approaches? These might include funding for pedagogic research, curricular development projects etc. and might be provided through central funds or through specific research units with budgetary autonomy.
- What is the overall leadership structure at university level for academic programmes including teaching, learning and assessment?

Faculty/department level:

- What are the communication structures and relationships between the higher management level at the university and the level of faculty and/or department related to student-centred teaching and learning?
- What is the role of faculty and/or department in the new study programme development?
- How do faculty share and access examples of good practice within departments?

Study board level:

- What is the structure and relationship of a Board of Studies (or other level) with the department, faculty and research centres within department?
- Is there a procedure for inter-disciplinary or multi-disciplinary programmes? Does this require the establishment of unique committees/boards and how do these relate to the overall structure? Are there problems in establishing such degrees? What are the problems?

- In depth review of assessment practice: the use of innovative methods of assessment e.g. peer assessment, the role of formative and summative assessment, types of assessment, blind and double marking, monitoring of assessment to ensure that it is effective in relation to the achievement of learning outcomes, mark distribution analysis both within a subject and between other subjects (i.e. across the University) to ensure equity and comparability, use of external examiners, marking systems with a clear definition of criteria (Note: the integration of assessment into the process of student centred learning and its relationship with learning outcomes is critical).
- What is the process for (a) the approval of a new degree programme – is there any difference between first cycle, second cycle and third cycle? (b) the approval of a new module in an existing degree? What level of change, enhancement in a degree programme or a module requires full institutional approval? How long does the process take for each of these? Note: Understanding the approval cycle is important.
- What role do students play in curriculum planning and development? Is there a difference in their role between the cycles? Note: it is important to understand how the students are appointed/nominated to relevant bodies and how they report back to their constituency.
- What procedures (if different from above) exist for developing new study programmes?
- How is e-learning implemented and to what extent is it embedded within the programmes?
- How are staff members involved in managing and coordinating a particular study programme (programme coordinators, semester coordinators, supervisors)? How is this formalized?
- What is the process for annual monitoring and periodic review of programmes?
- Are there any performance indicators?
- What is the process for student feedback? How is this managed and what impact does it have? Does it result in feedback on outcomes to the students?

Integrating disadvantaged groups of students:

- Does the University have an office/staff dedicated for students with a disability? What are the responsibilities and resources of the office?
- What special arrangements are made for students with a disability (incl., according to UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities)?
- What are the capacities of the university to work with students from disadvantaged backgrounds with regard to teaching approaches?
- What special approaches exist that are targeted at socially disadvantaged students?
- What approaches are followed for inclusion of students from non-academic backgrounds, if any?
- What academic support is available to students with learning disabilities?

Physical environment:

- Is the physical environment suitable/adapted for students with a physical disability? Is there a programme of adaptation for students with a physical disability?
- What student facilities exist that support student-centred teaching and learning: study group rooms, common rooms for students, extended university library opening hours, free wifi on campus, IT assistance for students

2. Study programme fit-for-purpose

This part is concerned with exploring a current study program structure at each EU-partner University with the focus on operational, functional details, normative and technical details. The level of analysis is a particular study programme.

Each Task Force Team will employ this part of the methodology to develop a benchmark understanding of structures, procedures and process related to the development and management of study programs in EU partner universities as well as explore the same at their own university in respective pilot study program.

Study program level:

- To what extent does it reflect the institutional strategy? [See also above]
- To what extent does it reflect subject benchmark statements of the equivalent?
- Is it competence based?
- Does it focus on 'employability'?
- Is it subject to professional or regulatory accreditation (particularly important for Medicine but probably the case for other subjects)
- Does it emphasise innovation, research led learning, entrepreneurship, internationalisation?
- To what extent does it use IT and/or blended learning?
- What is the structure of the chosen programme? (workload, semesters, modules, student evaluations, staff evaluations, learning progression). It would be useful to determine whether this process applies to second cycle as well?
- How is the program developed, enhanced and managed? What role do students play in the process? What role do employers play? Are other stakeholders consulted/engaged?
- Are former graduates/alumni consulted/engaged?
- What are the functions of the project coordinator, semester coordinator, teaching staff at the programme?
- What supporting documents exist in relation to the study programme? (course description, study regulations, guidelines, learning outcomes, evaluation guides). Are these publicly available?
- What are the existing program regulations and who is responsible for ensuring that they are followed?
- How are the programme structure and content monitored, reviewed, enhanced and implemented?
- How is staff workload calculated and monitored? How is the norm for allocation of hours (academic staff related) for various types of activities (teaching, supervision, evaluation) calculated (ECTS, formula, or historical)?
- How is student workload calculated and monitored and how does this help to shape curriculum planning and development?
- What are the expected learning outcomes? How are the learning outcomes reflected in the assessments? How are the learning outcomes communicated to the students and how are they assessed?
- How is the student evaluation/assessment conducted? What forms of evaluation are practiced? (Written exams/open questions, multiple choice tests, oral exams, project

presentations. Are there innovative forms of assessment e.g. peer assessment, IT based?)

- What are the progression requirements?
- What measures are taken to avoid and sanction 'cheating' and plagiarism? How are these recorded and evaluated?
- What are provisions for student appeals?
- What is the existing system of grading? What are the arrangements for credit transfer and accreditation of prior learning?
- What is the role of the external examiner?
- How is student-mobility embedded in the program structure and how it is facilitated?
- How is the staff evaluation/feedback conducted by the students? How are the outcomes of feedback managed?
- What are the academic requirements for students to enter the programme?
- How do students contribute to the curriculum development?
- How are the programs supported by administrators and what responsibilities do administrators have in directly supporting students? (e.g., answering enquiries; administration of assessments; managing academics' diaries etc.).
- Is the employment of graduates monitored? If so how and over what period?
- Which software, e-learning (e.g. Moodle, MOOC's, Knowledge Apps, moderated forums), how it is used, what checks there are for plagiarism

Folklore



Larisa Bugaian
National Coordinator
Technical University of Moldova
Stefan cel Mare 168
Chisinau, MD-2004, Moldova
Tel: (+373) 22 23 37 05
E-mail: larisa.bugaian@adm.utm.md
www.pblmd.aau.dk