



**ERASMUS+**  
**PROPOSAL (PART B)**  
**Scuola Internazionale Superiore di Studi Avanzati**  
**SISSA**  
**I-TRIESTE03**



**Erasmus: Key action 1: Erasmus  
Charter for Higher Education**

EACEA-03-2020 ECHE-LP-2020

## COMMITMENT TO THE ERASMUS CHARTER PRINCIPLES

### Declaration

I, undersigned, declare that if my institution is awarded with an Erasmus Charter for Higher Education, my institution will undertake to:

- Respect in full the principles of non-discrimination, transparency and inclusion set out in the Programme.
- Ensure equal and equitable access and opportunities to current and prospective participants from all backgrounds, paying particular attention to the inclusion of those with fewer opportunities.
- Ensure full automatic recognition of all credits (based on the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System – ECTS) gained for learning outcomes satisfactorily achieved during a period of study/training abroad, including during blended mobility.
- Charge no fees, in the case of credit mobility, to incoming mobile students for tuition, registration, examinations or access to laboratory and library facilities.
- Ensure the quality of the mobility activities and of the cooperation projects throughout the application and implementation phases.
- Implement the priorities of the Programme:
  - By undertaking the necessary steps to implement digital mobility management in line with the technical standards of the European Student Card Initiative.
  - By promoting environmentally friendly practices in all activities related to the Programme.
  - By encouraging the participation of individuals with fewer opportunities in the Programme.
  - By promoting civic engagement and encouraging students and staff to get involved as active citizens before, during and after their participation in a mobility or project.

### WHEN PARTICIPATING IN MOBILITY ACTIVITIES

#### Before mobility

- Ensure that selection procedures for mobility activities are fair, transparent, coherent and documented.
- Publish and regularly update the course catalogue on the website of the Institution well in advance of the mobility periods, so as to be transparent to all parties and allow mobile students to make well-informed choices about the courses they will follow.
- Publish and regularly update information on the grading system used and grade distribution tables for all study programmes. Ensure that students receive clear and transparent information on recognition and grade conversion procedures.
- Carry out mobility for the purpose of studying and teaching only within the framework of prior agreements between institutions. These agreements establish the respective

roles and responsibilities of the different parties, as well as their commitment to shared quality criteria in the selection, preparation, reception, support and integration of mobile participants.

- Ensure that outgoing mobile participants are well prepared for their activities abroad, including blended mobility, by undertaking activities to achieve the necessary level of linguistic proficiency and develop their intercultural competences.
- Ensure that student and staff mobility is based on a learning agreement for students and a mobility agreement for staff validated in advance between the sending and receiving institutions or enterprises and the mobile participants.
- Provide active support to incoming mobile participants throughout the process of finding accommodation.
- Provide assistance related to obtaining visas, when required, for incoming and outgoing mobile participants.
- Provide assistance related to obtaining insurance, when required, for incoming and outgoing mobile participants.
- Ensure that students are aware of their rights and obligations as defined in the Erasmus Student Charter.

#### **During mobility**

- Ensure equal academic treatment and the quality of services for incoming students.
- Promote measures that ensure the safety of outgoing and incoming mobile participants.
- Integrate incoming mobile participants into the wider student community and in the Institution's everyday life. Encourage them to act as ambassadors of the programme and share their mobility experience.
- Provide appropriate mentoring and support arrangements for mobile participants, including for those pursuing blended mobility.
- Provide appropriate language support to incoming mobile participants.

#### **After mobility**

- Provide incoming mobile students and their sending institutions with transcripts of records containing a full, accurate and timely record of their achievements at the end of their mobility period.
- Ensure that all ECTS credits gained for learning outcomes satisfactorily achieved during a period of study/training abroad, including during blended mobility are fully and automatically recognised as agreed in the learning agreement and confirmed by the transcript of records/traineeship certificate. They shall be transferred without delay into the student's records, shall be counted towards the student's degree without any additional work or assessment of the student and shall be traceable in the student's transcript of records and the Diploma Supplement.
- Ensure the inclusion of satisfactorily completed study and/or traineeship mobility activities in the final record of student achievements (the Diploma Supplement).
- Encourage and support mobile participants upon return to act as ambassadors of the

programme, promote the benefits of mobility and actively engage in building alumni communities.

- Ensure that staff is given recognition for their teaching and training activities undertaken during the mobility period, based on a mobility agreement and in line with the institutional strategy.

#### **WHEN PARTICIPATING IN EUROPEAN AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION PROJECTS**

- Ensure that cooperation activities contribute towards the fulfilment of the institutional strategy.
- Promote the opportunities offered by the cooperation projects and provide relevant support to staff and students interested in participating in these activities throughout the application and implementation phase.
- Ensure that cooperation activities lead to sustainable outcomes and that their impact benefits all partners.
- Encourage peer-learning activities and exploit the results of the projects in a way that will maximise their impact on individuals, other participating institutions and the wider academic community.

#### **FOR THE PURPOSES OF IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING**

- Ensure that the long-term institutional strategy and its relevance to the objectives and priorities of the Programme are described in the Erasmus Policy Statement.
- Ensure that the principles of the Charter are well communicated and are applied by staff at all levels of the Institution.
- Make use of the “ECHE guidelines” and of the “ECHE self-assessment” to ensure the full implementation of the principles of this Charter.
- Regularly promote activities supported by the Programme, along with their results.
- Display this Charter and the related Erasmus Policy Statement prominently on the Institution's website and on all other relevant channels.

*On behalf of the Institution, I acknowledge that the implementation of the Charter will be monitored by the Erasmus National Agencies and that a violation of the above principles and commitments may lead to its withdrawal by the European Commission.*

*On behalf of the institution, I commit to publishing the Erasmus Policy Statement on the institution website.*

Legal representative of the institution

Prof. Stefano RUFFO

SISSA Director

(digitally signed)

In the following sections of the application form, you will need to explain how your institution will fulfil the ECHE principles if the Charter is awarded. You are encouraged to consult the [ECHE Guidelines](#) for support in completing this application.

Please note that your Erasmus+ National Agency will monitor your Erasmus Policy Statement and your answers to the questions given in the application. The Erasmus+ National Agency reserves the right to request more information on your activities and propose supplementary measures, for the purposes of monitoring and implementing the Charter principles by your institution.

## 1. ERASMUS POLICY STATEMENT (EPS)

### 1.1 Erasmus activities included in your EPS

In this section, you need to tick the Erasmus activities covered by your Erasmus Policy Statement. Please select those activities that your HEI intends to implement during the entire duration of the Programme.

#### Erasmus Key Action 1 (KA1) - Learning mobility:

The mobility of higher education students and staff

#### Erasmus Key Action 2 (KA2) - Cooperation among organisations and institutions:

Partnerships for Cooperation and exchanges of practices

Partnerships for Excellence – European Universities

Partnerships for Excellence - Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees

Partnerships for Innovation

#### Erasmus Key Action 3 (KA3):

Erasmus Key Action 3 (KA3) - Support to policy development and cooperation:

## 1.2 Erasmus Policy statement (EPS): your strategy

Your Erasmus Policy Statement should reflect how you intended to implement Erasmus after the award of the ECHE. Should you wish to add additional activities in the future, you will need to amend your Erasmus Policy Statement and inform your Erasmus National Agency.

What would you like to achieve by participating in the Erasmus Programme? How does your participation in the Erasmus Programme fit into your institutional internationalisation and modernisation strategy?

(Please reflect on the objectives of your participation. Please explain how you expect the participation in Erasmus to contribute towards modernising your institution, as well as on the goal of building a European Education Area<sup>1</sup> and explain the policy objectives you intend to pursue).

SISSA is “international” by nature.

30% of our students and postdocs are from abroad and Trieste is unique for the particularly high concentration of national and international scientific institutions present in and around the city which is unrivalled in Europe: the International Centre for Theoretical Physics Abdus Salam (ICTP), the International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (ICGEB), Elettra Sincrotrone, the Astronomic Observatory of Trieste just to name a few.

Every year dozens of scientists are invited to SISSA to give lectures, seminars and for scientific collaboration.

But this is not enough to make SISSA really international.

One of SISSA’s main assets is the wide network of international relations with other universities and research centres which number around 140 throughout the world. Another indicator of structured international relations is SISSA’s remarkably high level of project funding at an EU level (in 2018, the School gained funding for 12 European Research Council projects, 7 Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions, 3 Future and Emerging Technologies projects). These relations allow the School to build partnerships in the field of research and to create opportunities for students to connect and work with wider research groups and scientists from other prestigious international universities and research centres during their training.

SISSA funds the international mobility of its PhD students in several ways:

- ❖ i. **scientific trip funding** for conferences, schools and scientific collaboration. SISSA provides each student with €550 a year for such trips, and additional funds may be available from supervisors’ externally financed projects (e.g. PRIN, H2020 grants, etc.);
- ❖ ii. **increase of monthly fellowship** for international mobility experiences lasting longer than one month. SISSA contributes with a **50% increase** for the entire period towards living costs while abroad. Travel expenses to reach the overseas destination can be covered with the funds referred to in point “i” above.

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<sup>1</sup> For more information on the priorities of the European Education Area, such as recognition, digital skills, common values and inclusive education, please consult the following website:  
[https://ec.europa.eu/education/education-in-the-eu/european-education-area\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/education/education-in-the-eu/european-education-area_en)

- ❖ iii. **Erasmus Job Placement fellowships** for mobility experiences lasting longer than two months within the European Union. Students can apply for funding through the Key to Europe project “KTEU”, coordinated by the University of Udine, and for national project funding ‘**Fondo Giovani**’ (Ministerial Decree 974/2014.) Travel expenses to reach the overseas destination can be covered with the funds referred to in point “i” above.

At the moment, an average of 30 students per year are involved in international mobility over 1 month (10% of total students). With the participation in the Erasmus programme, SISSA wishes to increase such figures in order to extend and strengthen its links with the international scientific community. Young brains are our future; by nurturing them in an international context, we aim to create the substrate for a better scientific and social environment.

Please reflect on the Erasmus actions you would like to take part in and explain how they will be implemented in practice at your institution. Please explain how your institution’s participation in these actions will contribute to achieving the objectives of your institutional strategy.

One of the most important strategies of SISSA, is to enlarge its international connections in order to achieve a higher level in scientific research. We believe that research and internationalization are strictly intertwined; high level research cannot exist without a strong international network of relations. Both scientific and human.

We would like to involve all our international scientific partners in a structured students exchange programme. The agreements mentioned in the previous sections are mainly based on mutual scientific programmes that does not necessarily involve our students. We would like to focus on new agreements tailored on the students’ exchange because we are convinced that this is the most effective action to lay down the foundation of their as well as our future.

What is the envisaged impact of your participation in the Erasmus+ Programme on your institution?

Please reflect on targets, as well as qualitative and quantitative indicators in monitoring this impact (such as mobility targets for student/staff mobility, quality of the implementation, support for participants on mobility, increased involvement in cooperation projects (under the KA2 action), sustainability/long-term impact of projects etc.) You are encouraged to offer an indicative timeline for achieving the targets related to the Erasmus+ actions.

As said before, about 10% of our students are involved in long term mobility. In the next seven year we would like to double this figure. SISSA numbers are quite small (about 300 Phd students, about 80 professors, 100 post-docs and 115 administrative and technical staff) so we can act on very specific targets. Using the existing network we aim to involve more and more our partners in shaping the future of our students (and viceversa). We wish to rethink the approach to cooperation projects putting the student, not the institutions, at the centre.

SISSA has a great experience in EU initiatives such as MSCA, Horizon2020, ... but we are quite new to the Erasmus world. We are partner in the KTEU Consortium with the University of Udine and others, but we would like to act “independently” and pursue our own objectives.

We are very much aware of the difficulties that may lie ahead but very eager to prove ourselves and determined to reach our objectives.

We cannot expect to increase our numbers “clockwork”. The first couple of years will be a sort of experiment. We are quite sure about the scientific areas we wish to involve in the project, but we will have to identify the institutes with a stronger interest to join us in this enterprise. The students’ involvement will not be a problem; on the contrary they are eager to have new experiences!

So, we foresee a very slight increase in numbers for the first few years, but we are quite confident that, in the second part of the programme, these will add another 5 - 10% (15 – 30 students) to our long term mobility.

In the next years SISSA will be strongly committed to

- develop the organization, processes and support services for the transfer of knowledge and the placement of young researchers;
- develop industrial and production partnerships in order to facilitate the creation of networks aimed at the development of research projects and to transfer knowledge, also through the inclusion of young researchers in production and innovation processes.

Participation in this programme will help us to create "spaces of action" for young researchers, aimed at developing and certifying their skills, in a logic of completion of the profile of independent researcher. This will be possible if we are able to develop new forms of collaboration with the international university system aimed at enhancing the excellence in the teaching of the School (thus also offering the possibility of accessing SISSA's educational offer.



## 2. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES

### 2.1 Implementation of the new principles

Please explain the measures taken in your institution to respect the principles of non-discrimination, transparency and inclusion of students and staff. Describe how your institution ensures full and equitable access to participants from all backgrounds, paying particular attention to the inclusion of those with fewer opportunities.

#### **Student-Professor Joint Committee (CPAD)**

The Student-Professor Joint Committee, regulated by art. 13 of the SISSA Statute, has the task of annually drawing up a comprehensive report for each PhD course which considers the overall educational offer, with particular reference to the results of the survey on students' opinions, highlighting any specific problems of individual PhD courses. The Committee is composed by 3 students and 3 professors representing the 3 scientific areas.

#### **Comitato Unico di Garanzia**

**Committee for equal opportunities**, for the wellbeing and against all types of discriminations and moral or psychological harassment for all people working or studying at SISSA. The main functions of this Committee concern:

- the proposal and the verification of the results of positive actions for the realization of equal opportunities;
- the improvement of the organizational wellbeing;
- the removal of all types of discriminations and moral or psychological harassment for all people working and studying at SISSA.

#### **SISSA actions for the wellbeing:**

##### ***Psychological counsellor for all personnel:***

This service is available once a week for all SISSA's personnel (students, postdocs, fixed-term and permanent employees, collaborators, etc) and offers support for personal and professional problems.

##### ***Ombudspersons:***

The ombudspersons are available as independent, neutral and confidential resources in order to help students and postdocs with conflicts within research groups and in the personal and professional relationships with the supervisors.

##### ***Confidential counsellor:***

The Confidential Counsellor provides free advice and assistance to every person at SISSA who feels discomfort or who is subjected to discrimination, harassment, dignity violation, or mobbing.

#### **SISSA actions for the for the reconciliation of professional and family lives:**

##### ***Kindergarden:***

This service is available to all who work at or collaborate with SISSA (administrative and technical personnel, faculty, postdocs, fellowship holders, students, other collaborators).

##### ***Summer centers:***

Agreements with institutions managing summer centers hosting employee's children within 3 and 13 years old during summer, and contributes to the costs according to the income.

*Remote working:*

Remote working projects are available aiming at spreading innovative forms of work management and organization, in order to improve the quality of life of employees while safeguarding the institutional needs also in terms of interpersonal networks, training, motivation, and empowerment.

*Part-time:*

A flexible structure of the work schedule is available in the presence of special family reasons.

*Maternity/Paternity leave for students:*

A five-months maternity/paternity leave contribution is granted to students

### **Technical-Administrative Staff Council**

It gathers to address issues concerning the organization of labor and occupational wellbeing. The Council is composed of the Director, who presides over it, by the Secretary General, by a professor appointed by the Academic Senate based on the Director's proposal and by three members of the technical-administrative staff.

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Access to all SISSA entrance exams is specifically granted without limits of age, gender, nationality, etc.. Specific entrance exams modalities are foreseen to foreign candidate (online interviews)

Candidates with physical and/or intellectual disabilities are put into the condition to participate do the exam on an equal basis (technical devices and/or time extension to sit the test).

The selecting committees are formed by both internal and external members in order to ensure maximum efficacy and transparency.

All final acts are published on the official SISSA web pages.

All SISSA students are granted a fellowship; those who should hold fellowships of a lesser amount from other sources will have an increase by School funds up to the SISSA amount. besides that

Several contribution are meant to help them during their course of studies:

- A contribution towards living expenses of the amount of €100,00 gross per month upon presentation of a registered contract.
- A "laptop contribution" up to € 400,00;
- A contribution towards the expenses to be enrolled in the health insurance system up to € 198,77 (granted to non-EU students only);
- Students enrolled in the third/fourth year can request a contribution of up to € 1.000,00 for their access to training and/or to create a network of academic contacts to help them in their future career.
- A contribution (70% of the amount of the fellowship) may be awarded to students who should be forced to suspend their activity due to illness, maternity or other serious reasons up to 5 months.

All internal selections are made by committees who can also involve students (i.e. for the students' part-time activities).

Gender equality is pursued by SISSA in every aspect and activity (invited speakers, members of the committees, ...)

Please explain what measures your institution will put in place to implement the European Student Card Initiative, and promote the use of the programme's Erasmus+ mobile App to students. Please refer to the timeline indicated on the European Student Card Initiative website<sup>2</sup>.

Dematerialization is one of the goals SISSA is already pursuing.

Since 2010 all requests of admission to our courses have been done online; since 2019 all requests are fully processed electronically both on the candidates, the administration, the referees and the selecting committees side.

Starting from this year we began to use extensively the digital form for part of our official act (mainly, but not only for Director's and Secretary General Decrees).

So it is with great pleasure that we will embrace the European Student Card initiative.

Even though the number of our students is quite low, we like to consider each and every one as very special, specifically in their needs. We have mathematicians, physicists, biologists, psychologists, so their teaching and scientific activity differs a lot. Many of them are Italians, but 1/3 come from abroad (more than 40 countries represented). The travel all around the world, have contacts with many different university systems, many different cultures.

A common platform that can ease their lives is surely a great asset; managing mobility is certainly difficult; ever tool that can help is very much appreciated. The link to cultural initiatives is really interesting; this will certainly boost the programme. We very much hope that "flexibility" will be a keyword!

We consider the milestones foreseen by the programme in line with our programmes; we therefore commit ourselves to give maximum exposure at this initiative both among our students and our professors (they will benefit as well as them from this opportunity) and are eager to start as soon as possible.

Please explain how your institutions will implement and promote environmentally friendly practices in the context of the Erasmus+ programme.

As said in the previous paragraph, dematerialization is one of our target.

But this is only one of the aspects of our policy towards environment.

Travels of our staff are planned also taking into account of the impact on the environment (whenever possible we favour low impact means of travel such as trains) In the future we will more and more take care of this aspect.

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<sup>2</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/education/education-in-the-eu/european-student-card-initiative\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/education/education-in-the-eu/european-student-card-initiative_en)

One of the (very few) positive impact that the COVID-19 epidemic is the “smart working” lesson.

We have learned that many activities can be performed from our houses, thus limiting the impact on local traffic.

It is intention of SISSA management to significantly reduce physical presence of the administrative staff on our premises favouring the so called “smart working”. This will reduce impact on traffic but also on other resources (spaces, air conditioning, lighting, etc.)

We are also considering the possibility to organize online events (Schools, conferences) on a regular basis to avoid unnecessary travels.

In consideration of the above, we plan to organize the Erasmus+ activities online, wherever possible. Contacts, meetings, selection of candidates, will be all performed online. We have more and more “connecting tools” that can help us in this matter. Physical contact is surely important, but if we share the same vision about our environment, we can “scarify” it to a greater cause.

Please explain how you will promote civic engagement and active citizenship amongst your outgoing and incoming students before, after and during mobility.

We wish to involve more and more our students in these initiatives; we make no difference whether incoming or outgoing.

Besides the environmental issues, which is already taken care of for all SISSA fellows, we would like to let them have a deeper understanding of the Country they’re going to live in. We already have a very efficient service for incoming students (and researchers) from abroad, coordinated by the Autonomous Region Friuli Venezia Giulia. The Welcome Office provide useful information and tailored assistance to international students and researchers before and during their stay in our region.

With the help of the partner Universities and Research Institutes, we wold like to create not only a scientific network but also a sort of cultural link so we can mutually benefit from it.

Since many of our students are coming from outside EU, it is of enormous importance to let them understand that, even if Europe is made of many different cultures, we are walking in the same direction.

It is our opinion that the most important part of the journey, is when you’re back home. When you rethink about your experience and transfer it to your neighbour.

## 2.2 When participating in Mobility Activities - After mobility

Please demonstrate your commitment to implement full automatic recognition in your Higher Education Institution.

Please describe the concrete steps you will take to ensure the full automatic recognition of all credits gained for learning outcomes achieved during a mobility period abroad/ a blended mobility, according to the Council Recommendation on Automatic Mutual Recognition<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> The text of the Council Recommendation on Automatic Mutual Recognition may be found at: [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1568891859235&uri=CELEX:32018H1210\(01\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1568891859235&uri=CELEX:32018H1210(01))

Being our students involved in doctoral courses, learning and research activities abroad are an essential part of their curriculum. Full automatic recognition of such activities will be stressed in any agreement we may sign with foreign counterparts (Universities, Research Institutes, etc.)

We do not adopt ECTS for our activities; though a conversion can be easily made between credits/marks of our courses and those foreseen by ECTS. The period of the mobility, with particular emphasis of attended courses, will be fully recognized on our certifications.

Please describe your institution's measures to support, promote and recognise staff mobility:

SISSA values not only the students' mobility but the staff's as well. Specific funds for staff mobility are foreseen, both for activities in Italy and abroad (mainly related to our ERC projects). Specific courses have been promoted in collaboration with the other Universities of the Region to strengthen our bonds and promote staff "training".

All courses are fully recognized by the Administration and contribute to the career advancement.

### 2.3 For the Purposes of Visibility

Please provide the web link where you will host the Erasmus Policy statement in the future. Please reflect on how you plan to regularly promote the activities supported by the Programme.

Since we only deal in Job Placement fellowships (<https://www.sissa.it/erasmus-traineeship-fellowships>) we do not have an "Erasmus web page" yet.

We plan to create an ERASMUS page in this section of our website:

<https://www.sissa.it/training>

The page will be maintained by the Students' Secretariat Staff who will also deal with all the other aspects of the activity (agreements, mobility, etc.)

We will also involve our Valorisation and Innovation Office that will help in developing the best strategies to ensure the maximum performance from the programme.

Please describe how you will ensure that the principles of this Charter will be well communicated and applied by staff at all levels of the institution.

We will advertise the Charter at all levels, starting from the Academic Senate, and will advertise it through our mailing lists and social channels.

We will also involve in the process of monitoring the activity our advisory bodies:

**Students Council**

**Students-Professors Joint Committee**

### **Technical-Administrative Staff Council**

and supervisory bodies

The **Quality Assurance Unit**, that supervises the adequate performance of QA procedures based on the guidelines defined by the Governing Bodies.

It provides the necessary support, ex-ante and in progress, to the actors responsible for implementing strategies, monitoring QA processes and ensuring a correct information flow between the Evaluation Committee and the Student-Professor Joint Committee.

In particular, the functions of the Quality Assurance Unit are:

- coordinating and supporting the procedures for Quality Assurance;
- verifying and certifying the information requested in the SUA-RD platform;
- monitoring the surveys of students' opinions;
- activating any initiative useful to promote a culture of quality inside the School;
- evaluating the efficacy of the improvement actions and their actual consequences;
- monitoring the implementation of steps taken following recommendations and/or conditions formulated by the Commission of Experts for the Evaluation of Schools (CEVS) on external visits.

The **Evaluation committee**, regulated by art. 10 of the Statute, carries out a surveillance role to evaluate the overall efficacy of the School's QA system ex-post. It also puts forwards proposals for improvement. In fulfilling its role as internal and external evaluator, it operates to increase the culture of quality assurance and the development of the School's QA system and, at the same time, supports ANVUR and the Ministry for Education, University and Research (MIUR) within the purpose of monitoring compliance with the requirements of the initial and periodic Accreditation of study courses and of premises. It draws up an annual evaluation report according to the guidelines issued by ANVUR, in which it provides information regarding compliance with QA requirements and any initiatives implemented to promote quality. On the basis of this document, the Quality Assurance Unit and the Governing Bodies are ready to receive opinions and suggestions.