



Evaluation reports by the independent evaluator – Report 2

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Executive Summary

This report covers the first two reporting periods for the PAWER project. After the shift of the external evaluation from the project coordinator to MUHEC, Oracle TES was sub-contracted to perform an external evaluation of the project. The reporting period covers the four years of the project.

In line with WP-5 and in particular WP-5.2 the coordinator invited applications for the sub-contracted post of external evaluator (EE) to be selected. The external evaluation involvement focused primarily on the “Evaluation of the Pilot Strategy”. The report content is based on the following information:

- In collaboration with MUHEC, Oracle TES evaluated the analysis and survey on the actual situation on credits and grades. MUHEC collected from all partners the necessary information for credit transfer and grade conversion.
- Analysed external indicators, such as adequacy and relevancy of the project implementation to students' needs. The discussion focused on how the creation of system supporting mobility between partners would offer further opportunities for students of all partners.
- In collaboration with MUHEC to gather feedback from the consortium members regarding their credit and grade systems. The most appropriate approach was email exchanges using specific templates, supported by face to face discussions (clarification interviews following the information provided through the templates).
- Evaluated the results of the pilot activities, their clarity, transparency and applicability to other contexts.
- Evaluated the real application of the developed schemes (focusing on the demonstrations offered at the regional conferences and on location training on the MUSKET tools).

In agreement with the project coordinator, the sub-contractor was asked to produce two reports covering the entire project period. These reports look at all the work packages, including management and quality. Andy Golding, Managing Director of Oracle TES has been identified as an experienced academic and professional with experience in quality assurance, acting as the QA Director for the Online Business School and participating as an external expert in several Erasmus+ Capacity Building in Higher Education projects.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Report scope

The scope of this report is to provide an independent, external evaluation of the project's progress. The structure of the report follows a linear approach as it discusses each one of the project's work packages and specific deliverables. Emphasis is given on assessing the following:

- In collaboration with MUHEC, to evaluate the analysis and survey on the actual situation on credits and grades. MUHEC collected from all partners the necessary information for credit transfer and grade conversion.
- External indicators, such as adequacy and relevancy of the project implementation to students' needs. The focus is on how the creation of system supporting mobility between partners would offer further opportunities for students of all partners.
- In collaboration with MUHEC to gather feedback from the consortium members regarding their credit and grade systems. The selected approach was email exchanges using specific templates, supported by face to face discussions (clarification interviews following the information provided through the templates).
- The results of the pilot activities, their clarity, transparency and applicability to other contexts.
- The real application of the developed schemes (focusing on the demonstrations offered at the regional conferences and on location training on the MUSKET tools).

The report is a result of the analysis conducted by the author of progress in all PAWER work packages. Oracle TES was selected to review the project progress after MUHEC took over the subcontracting activity from the project coordinator. MUHEC and Oracle TES staff liaised in order to ensure that the external evaluation was based on accurate interpretation of the progress achieved in the WP deliverables as well as the state of documentation provided via the project's cloud space. Oracle TES was able to direct enquiries to all participating institutions via MUHEC and also collaborate with MUHEC on the development of the MUSKET tools, discussed in a different report.

The period covered by this report was till January 2020.

2. Project progress

There are 7 Work Packages in the project with most of them having two deliverables. The project work was balanced and there was a careful plan on allocating tasks across the entire consortium. The WP leadership was mainly assigned to EU partners due to the nature of the work carried out and their experience. As the project covered multiple regions, it became evident that the consortium wanted to achieve contributions from all partners in order to have a harmonised representation both at regional and national level.

It appears that there are some interesting facts in relation to the project, as follows:

- Entire project duration – The project appears for the outset was an ambitious one, as it aims to harmonise mobilities between so many institutions that cover four regions and eight countries. This was an impressive consortium in terms of its size and complexity. There was also a wide range of specialisms represented as certain institutions had a specific focus on key areas such as agriculture.

- Entire project duration – The project had an initial delay of a couple of months regarding the training sessions in EU partners due to visa arrangements. However, this did not affect the entire training programme, as the three training workshops were organised in a period of a few weeks. It must be noted that the location of one of the training workshops had to change. Another important note regards the shift of training responsibilities to MUHEC, as it demonstrated the ability to provide capacity for training topics that were lacking from other EU partners. This is reflected in budget changes and the number of tasks that were completed under MUHEC's coordination.
- Entire project duration – There was also a slight delay on the development of the system for the credit transfer and grade conversion. The original plan did not involve MUHEC's contribution to the extent it was provided in the end. There was an adjustment including subcontracting costs for software development, as MUHEC offered the adaptation of its MUSKET tools to support PAWER's deliverables.
- Entire project duration – The project coordinator who has extensive experience with similar projects managed to address any issues demonstrating impressive agility while addressing issues such as delays, lack of contribution and even the need to change the consortium structure. This is evident from the fact that the project has eventually met its targets and exceeded expectations, especially in the field of re-training.
- Entire project duration – There was a lot of support from an experienced team of academics who are participating with their EU institutions, and there is evidence of continuous support towards the project coordinator. This is a project where there is continuous evidence that the EU expertise is shared in an effective way. The consortium appears to combine their areas of expertise by adapting the original travel arrangements. This meant that experts from all EU partners attended certain project meetings and in particular training sessions. This allowed the integration of different topics in training agendas, making sure that participants benefit from different perspectives and obtaining a holistic view of the topics covered in each training week.
- Second reporting period – the project managed to provide sufficient training to all participating institutions. It appears that for each country there is sufficient volume of translated materials and adapted training structures.
- Second reporting period – re-training reached impressive, unprecedented volumes! The project consortium used the original plan of 111 trainees as the foundation for creating a significant number of local trained staff. The re-training programme was so effective that there are now more than 1,000 individuals trained across the participating institutions.
- Second reporting period – furthermore, training and re-training penetration at executive level was phenomenal (>60% of training participants were executives). This will have a significant impact on future mobilities, as there is awareness at senior level of the issues of mobility visits.
- Second reporting period – it is not clear to what extent the translated content will be sufficient for the future training sessions. It is necessary for the local teams to ensure that they frequently revise their training resources and liaise with the EU partners that have already offered their expertise to help the sustainability of the project's outputs.
- Second reporting period – there should be more organised efforts to provide evaluations of the re-training sessions. The local teams need to understand that the evaluation of training sessions must follow an in-depth and consistent approach. The approach towards evaluation also tends to be affected by cultural differences, but this is difficult to prove.

- Second reporting period – the successful implementation of the MUSKET tools enabled the PAWER to reach one of its key objectives. The system allows the development of learning plans, as it supports a transparent process for credit and grade alignment between participating institutions.

The project's WPs and deliverables are listed below:

1. WP-1 Data Collection

- a. D1.1 Exchange of information on local systems on 13 (5 EU and 8 PC) FQ and Credit Systems
- b. D1.2. Preparation of a survey of 13 different National Framework of Qualifications: the existing credit systems and degree of knowledge and application of ECTS system, where already established.

2. WP-2 Organization of Study visits in EU

- a. D2.1 Identification and preparation of pilot staff group in each PC university
- b. D2.2. Organization of 1-week training study tours in EU: Definition of course content and pedagogical resources, training of 111 academic staff

3. WP-3 Enhancement of staff skills and strategy development

- a. D3.1. Local Training Seminars conducted by retrained staff in their institutions
- b. D3.2 Constitution of competent Local Team. Preparation, in each PC institution, of a draft for the comparative scheme reviewed and officially agreed during the first regional meeting

4. WP-4 Pilot degree courses adaptation

- a. D4.1 Identification of 5 fields of study and description of profiles, by general and specific LOs
- b. D4.2 Allocation of ECTS to each module
- c. D4.3 Students' performances for the identified fields of study in the last 3 years expressed in percentage of grades obtained
- d. D4.4 Synoptic scheme of grade systems and manual for the correct transfer of grades between the involved institutions

5. WP-5 Quality Control and Monitoring

- a. D5.1 Establishment of Quality Control and Monitoring strategy and tools
- b. D5.2 Four evaluation reports by the independent evaluator
- c. D5.3 Financial Auditing reports

6. WP-6 Dissemination Strategy and Tools

- a. D6.1 Dissemination and Sustainability plan. Production of information materials (electronic)
- b. D6.2 Local meetings with main stakeholders and project website
- c. D6.3 Web-site preparation and updating
- d. D6.4 Organisation of 2 Regional Meetings in each region

7. WP-7 Management

- a. D7.1 Project management structure and body: financial flows and coordination strategy
- b. D7.2 Local and transnational coordination of the project, decision making procedures
- c. D7.3 Organisation of 4 SC meetings

2.1 WP-1: Data Collection

The evaluation of the first WP was discussed in the first report.

The performance of the WP deliverables is as follows:

D1.1 Exchange of information on local systems on 13 (5 EU and 8 PC) FQ and Credit Systems

This deliverable was discussed in the first report.

D1.2. Preparation of a survey of 13 different National Framework of Qualifications: the existing credit systems and degree of knowledge and application of ECTS system, where already established

This deliverable was discussed in the first report.

2.2 WP-2: Organization of Study visits in EU

The evaluation of the second WP was discussed in the first report.

The performance of the WP deliverables is as follows (emphasis on quality and management):

D2.1 Identification and preparation of pilot staff group in each PC university

This deliverable was discussed in the first report.

D2.2. Organization of 1-week training study tours in EU: Definition of course content and pedagogical resources, training of 111 academic staff

This deliverable was discussed in the first report.

2.3 WP-3: Enhancement of staff skills and strategy development

The evaluation of the third WP can be summarised as follows:

The performance of the WP deliverables is as follows:

D3.1. Local Training Seminars conducted by retrained staff in their institutions

This is another activity where MUHEC provided additional support. The MUHEC team coordinated the delivery of re-training sessions across all partner institutions. Detailed templates were produced and disseminated via email. The scope was to collect information about how the trained ‘champions’ from each institution would be used to establish a critical mass of re-trained staff. Each partner institution provided a detailed agenda of the re-training sessions. The project coordinators and MUHEC agreed that it was necessary to allow sufficient flexibility to each partner, in order to meet their own needs. Therefore, re-training sessions lasted from one to three days, while in some cases re-training sessions were organised as a series of events rather than one-off workshop. This helped each partner to make the necessary adjustments according to their needs, as well as available resources.

D3.2 Constitution of competent Local Team. Preparation, in each PC institution, of a draft for the comparative scheme reviewed and officially agreed during the first regional meeting

Emails were sent to all partners to establish the local teams. The regional and national coordination teams organised conferences to discuss the comparative schemes for credit recognition. The organisation of two regional conferences allowed the consortium to decide a concrete credit recognition framework early on, while allowing a chance to review its application during the second regional conference.

2.4 WP-4: Pilot degree courses adaptation

The evaluation of the fourth WP can be summarised as follows:

- Draft comparative analysis was produced.
- Credit recognition mapping was achieved.
- Grade conversion mapping was achieved.
- MUSKET was developed and deployed.

The performance of the WP deliverables is as follows:

D4.1 Identification of 5 fields of study and description of profiles, by general and specific LOs

MUHEC supported USZ by providing additional coordination based on specific templates to collect the necessary information. Each partner received guidelines on how to produce the information needed for the pilots. Eventually, with additional guidance from the coordinators, the consortium managed to gather the necessary information from all partner institutions. The documentation provided included all information needed for learning agreements in hypothetical student mobility arrangements. Furthermore, sufficient number of courses was gathered to offer a wide range of fields, and detailed course information in English.

D4.2 Allocation of ECTS to each module

All partners were required to reflect on the learning hours required for each course and attempt a comparison to ECTS. The consortium invested a lot of time discussing this issue during regional conferences, as well as coordination meetings and email exchanges. Eventually, all courses were described with respect to ECTS or similar credit. A credit map was produced for each institution, allowing the finalisation of the national and regional credit framework of PAWER.

Types of academic work	Value of conversion	
	min	max
Theoretical training (taking into account classroom activities and CPC)	1,5	1,8
Training Practice	0,5	0,6
Teaching practice	1,0	1,2
Production practice	2,5	3,0
Final attestation of the student	3,2	4,0

Parameters	ECTS	Kazakhstan Credit System
Total number of credits for the years of study	180 credits for 3 years, 240 credits for 4 years	129 credits of theoretical training, total 186 credits for 4 years
Labor intensity of the school year	60 credits	24-36 credits
1 credit	25-30 hours for all kind of work	45 hours - theoretical training 15 hours - training practice 30 hours - teaching practice 75 hours - professional practice

		ECTS equivalent	Number of students per grade	Course content
Azerbaijan	KHAZAR	Y	Y	Y
	BEU/QU	Y	Y	Y
Georgia	BSU	Y	Y	Y
	ISU	Y	Y	Y
	ATSU	Y	Y	Y
Kyrgyzstan	KNAU	Y	Y	Y
	KNU	Y	Y	Y
	OSU	Y	n	n
Kazakhstan	InEU	Y	Y	Y
	KATU	Y	Y	too short
	KokSU	Y	Y	too short
	KazNAU	Y	n	n
Mongolia	MUST	Y	n	n
	NUM	Y	Y	too short
Russia	SibSUTIS	Y	Y	Y
	SpSUT	n	only 1 year	Y
Tajikistan	TUT	Y	Y	Y
	KhSU	Y	n	n
	KulSU	Y	Y	too short
	TSUC	Y	Y	Y
Uzbekistan	SAI	Y	Y	Y
	AAI	Y	Y	Y
	TerSU	Y	Y	Y
England	MDX	Y	Y	Y
Poland	WUELS	Y	n	Y
Italy	UNIVAQ	Y	n	Y
Hungary	USZ	Y	n	Y
Bulgaria	UCTM	Y	n	Y

D4.3 Students' performances for the identified fields of study in the last 3 years expressed in percentage of grades obtained

The brief extension given to the project allowed to rethink the development of the WP and how the data should be collected. Eventually all partners provided the necessary grades to populate the system and enable the MUSKET algorithm (using the EGRACONS formula) to compare the grades from each participating institution.

D4.4 Synoptic scheme of grade systems and manual for the correct transfer of grades between the involved institutions

Following the dissemination of the MUHEC grade conversion procedure and use of its templates as training manual for the training of participating institutions, the consortium decided to sub-contract the adaptation of the MUSKET system to meet the PAWER needs. The MUSKET system allows the alignment of credit and grade systems between participating institutions. Therefore, both processes could be based on the system's decision-making following data entry after the successful completion of a student mobility. The MUSKET tool was demonstrated during the second round of regional conferences, as well as a coordination meeting. The consortium approved its functionality,

2.5 WP-5: Quality Control and Monitoring

The evaluation of the fifth WP can be summarised as follows:

- Evaluation of each activity was coordinated by WUELS consistently and effective.
- MUHEC has provided evaluation of all training sessions.
- Extra training sessions were held in Almaty and Bishkek.
- Regional conferences were also used for re-training.
- Ideally local partners should have used more detailed means to provide information on re-training evaluation.

The performance of the WP deliverables is as follows:

D5.1 Establishment of Quality Control and Monitoring strategy and tools

WUELS appears to be in full control of the project's quality and monitoring processes. The EU partner provides a detailed survey at the end of each activity and travelled when necessary to ensure that all data regarding the evaluation of project activities are accurately collected and reported.

MUHEC also provided detailed evaluations on training and re-training sessions. The use of Google forms allowed the production of useful visualisations demonstrating the positive impact training sessions had.

It is important to commend the consistency of the monitoring methods used by the WP leaders across the entire project period.

D5.2 Four evaluation reports by the independent evaluator

This report covers the second period of the PAWER project.

D5.3 Financial Auditing reports

Could not report on this activity.

2.6 WP-6: Dissemination Strategy and Tools

The evaluation of the sixth WP can be summarised as follows:

- Website developed and maintained
- Training content including videos is available
- Re-training content is available
- Train the trainers infrastructure is available
- Portfolio structure is available

The performance of the WP deliverables is as follows:

D6.1 Dissemination and Sustainability plan. Production of information materials (electronic)

This deliverable was discussed in the first report.

D6.2 Local meetings with main stakeholders and project website

This deliverable was discussed in the first report.

D6.3 Web-site preparation and updating

This deliverable was discussed in the first report.

D6.4 Organisation of 2 Regional Meetings in each region

The second round of regional meetings was organised very effectively. It is important to focus on the fact that these meetings were also used as re-training opportunities, while the MUSKET tools were demonstrated to all attendees. The regional conferences confirmed the adoption of the credit transfer and grade conversion framework and the use of the MUSKET tools.

2.7 WP-7: Management

The evaluation of the seventh WP can be summarised as follows:

- Excellent delivery of WP and management.
- Initial delays were addressed.
- Adjustment on WP management and efforts.

The performance of the WP deliverables is as follows:

D7.1 Project management structure and body: financial flows and coordination strategy

UNIVAQ managed to adapt the project a number of times, mostly due to the need to reshape the responsibility allocation for a couple of WPs. The coordinator's ability to operate with the resources available made the project's successful completion possible.

D7.2 Local and transnational coordination of the project, decision making procedures

The local coordination was a responsibility of the regional groups, which was a great idea. There is a range of examples of how different regional groups approached the same tasks. In any case, the local coordination can be viewed as successful. UNIVAQ was excellent in coordinating the transnational issues of the project. WUELS was key in the maintenance of the quality and monitoring processes. MUHEC played a critical role in coordinating the consortium across three WPs.

D7.3 Organisation of 4 SC meetings

The organisation of all committee meetings was based on well-structured agendas. There is evidence that each meeting was effective with clear input for the future of the project. It is really positive to see that such meetings were indeed critical drivers for the project's deliverables and helped the consortium to reflect and move forward.

3. SWOT Analysis

This section provides an analysis of the current Strengths and Weaknesses of the EQAC project, as well as the future Opportunities and Threats.

<p><u>Strengths</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critical mass of trained staff reached. • Infrastructure for training created. • Credit recognition and grade conversion mappings achieved. 	<p><u>Weaknesses</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inconsistent information across the 23 institutions in course content and grade details.
<p><u>Opportunities</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Application of PAWER-MUSKET across institutions. • Expansion of credit recognition and grade conversion mappings across regions. • Links with employability with job sites. 	<p><u>Threats</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project outputs to fade away.

4. Evaluation of the PAWER Pilot strategy

This section concludes the Oracle TES views on the PAWER pilot strategy (key issues) from an external perspective.

4.1 The evaluation of the analysis and survey on the actual situation on credits and grades

In collaboration with MUHEC, Oracle TES evaluated the analysis and survey on the actual situation on credits and grades. MUHEC collected from all partners the necessary information for credit transfer and grade conversion.

- The project achieved a mapping of credit recognition and grade conversion between 23 institutions
- The project produced the MUSKET tool supporting mobility preparation and after-mobility procedures
- The project created a critical mass of trained staff with increased awareness
- The project provided train-the-trainers programme that is self-sustained

4.2 The analysis of external indicators, such as adequacy and relevancy of the project implementation to students' need

External indicators, such as adequacy and relevancy of the project implementation to students' needs were analysed. The focus was on how the creation of system supporting mobility between partners would offer further opportunities for students of all partners.

- ECTS deployment at national level is required in all participating countries
- Links to other countries should be considered
- Employability alignment with job sites to courses should be considered

4.3 Feedback from the consortium members through interviews

Oracle TES collaborated with MUHEC to gather feedback from the consortium members regarding their credit and grade systems. The selected approach was email exchanges using specific templates, supported by face to face discussions (clarification interviews following the information provided through the templates).

- Reflection on internal processes on mobility
- Reflection on policy making and procedures
- Review of practices through portfolios
- Self-evaluation through portfolios
- Certified training

4.4 The results of the pilot activities, their clarity, transparency and applicability to other contexts

Oracle TES evaluated the results of the pilot activities, their clarity, transparency and applicability to other contexts.

- Completely sustainable toolkit provided
- Train the trainers infrastructure provided
- Training content including videos was provided
- Evaluation toolkit for re-training was provided

4.5 The real application of the developed schemes

Oracle TES evaluated the real application of the developed schemes (focusing on the demonstrations offered at the regional conferences and on location training on the MUSKET tools).

- Around 1,000 people were trained
- Training and re-training toolkits were developed and deployed
- 23 institutions apply PAWER-MUSKET tools
- Applicability of the PAWER deliverables across regions – true internationalisation of project outcomes