

# Typology of International Joint Programmes

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## Typology of joint programmes

CHARACTER	ABBREVIATION	DIPLOMA	REQUISITES	COMMENTARY
new joint programme	Joint Degree	One JSP leading to the award of one diploma, attesting to <b>one qualification earned</b> .	<p>Requires a <b>written agreement</b> signed by the representatives of all the participating institutions, detailing all aspects of the joint programme.</p> <p><b>Accredited</b> according to national legislation by each participating institution (which individually may or may not be able to accept or take into account an accreditation via the <b>European Approach</b>)</p>	<p><i>Administratively the most demanding but also the most prestigious joint programme leading to a joint diploma. Developing these forms of cooperation is a priority of Charles University.</i></p> <p><i>The issuance of joint diplomas is also supported by the European Commission, which is, model together with the Member States, currently funding a project to produce a proposal for a potential single European diploma. Charles University is participating in this project through its involvement in the 4EU+ Alliance.</i></p>
new joint programme	Double/Multiple Degree	Leads to earning <b>one qualification</b> in a given study cycle from the universities in the consortium, irrespective of the number of diplomas (two or more) that the graduate receives. The diplomas are often adjusted in such a way as to evidence that they attest to a single curriculum, irrespective of the number of diplomas awarded.	<p>Requires a <b>written agreement</b> signed by the representatives of all the participating institutions, detailing all aspects of the joint programme.</p> <p><b>Accredited</b> according to national legislation by each participating institution (which individually may or may not be able to accept or take into account an accreditation via the <b>European Approach</b>)</p>	<p><i>This cooperation does not lead to the award of a joint diploma but nevertheless is a fully-fledged joint programme. This option is applied when, due to legislative differences, no consensus can be found on how to award a joint diploma.</i></p> <p><i>This remains a widely utilised and legally unproblematic option.</i></p>
extension of an existing study programme	Joint/Double/Multiple Degree	This programme can lead to an award of a <b>joint diploma</b> or <b>multiple separate diplomas</b> .	<p>Requires a <b>written agreement</b> signed by the representatives of all the participating institutions, detailing all aspects of the joint programme.</p> <p>An extension of</p>	<p><i>The extension of the existing programme with an international study plan is possible if it does not violate the existing graduate profile. The students of the particular study plan conduct their studies transnationally, whereas the students of the domestic programme study</i></p>

			<p>an existing programme to include a study plan implemented in cooperation with a foreign HEI is possible only after successfully <b>approved application</b> submitted to the <b>Internal Evaluation Board</b>.</p>	<p><i>according to accreditation requirements applicable only at Charles University.</i></p>
<b>THE INITIATIVES INDICATED BELOW CAN NOT BE CLASIFIED AS JOINT PROGRAMMES</b>				
<b>structured mobility</b>	<b>Dual Degree</b>	<p>Multiple (usually two) <b>standard ones</b> – each participating university awards its own</p>	<p>Cooperation between two or more <b>independently constructed</b> independent programmes. Each programme must be accredited according to the relevant national legislation of each country, where the programme is realized.</p> <p>Usually operates on the basis of a <b>written agreement</b> executed by representatives of all participating institutions, describing all aspects of cooperation</p>	<p><i>This type does not entail a joint programme, but a structuralized mobility. This model most often takes the form of mirror recognition of a course of study, which leads to undesirable double counting. More often than not, this also includes graduating from two independent SPs by defending one final thesis.</i></p> <p><i>For this reason, this form of cooperation is problematic from the point of view of quality assurance (and also from a legal perspective) and is perceived controversially within the European academic community.</i></p>
<b>other forms (on a sub-programme basis)</b>	<b>Micro-credentials, Learning Pathways, internships, summer programmes, Joint Teaching Modules, Massive Open Online Courses etc.</b>	<p>These initiatives usually <b>do not lead</b> to the award of a <b>standard university diploma</b>. However, some may lead to the award of a different type of appropriate documentation (e.g., micro-certificates) attesting to their completion (different from a standard university diploma)</p>	<p>These initiatives usually do not <b>require a separate accreditation process</b> (but are usually implemented within the framework of a unit that does). The formal requirements for all the different models vary from case to case.</p>	<p><i>Collaborations that do not reach the level of joint programmes are, of course, also encouraged but should not be confused with joint programmes.</i></p>

## Compatibility with European trends

By their nature, transnational joint programmes are implemented at a level that goes beyond individual national or institutional frameworks. It is, therefore, important to monitor **international trends** with respect to their implementation, which in the context of the Czech Republic also means monitoring the current and upcoming methodological recommendations and regulations of the European Commission in order to achieve the highest degree of compatibility. This orientation increases the chances of Charles University's success with projects funded by the EU, such as **Erasmus Mundus**<sup>1</sup> and **Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions**;<sup>2</sup> and it likewise facilitates possible accreditation through the European Approach,<sup>3</sup> implementation of the **Lisbon Convention**,<sup>4</sup> alignment of study offers within the 4EU+ Alliance, as well as Charles University's engagement in the ongoing **European Degree** initiative.

## Ambivalent terminology

Transnational joint programmes are considered **one of the pinnacles of possible cooperation** in the European academic system; however, their typology and classification is also associated with **inconsistencies in terminology** used.<sup>5</sup> This inconsistency is often linked to discrepancies

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<sup>1</sup> For information about the annual Erasmus Mundus competition, cf. <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/opportunities/individuals/students/erasmus-mundus-joint-masters-scholarships> and [http://www.erasmusplus.ac.me/?page\\_id=5616&lang=en](http://www.erasmusplus.ac.me/?page_id=5616&lang=en).

<sup>2</sup> For information about the annual Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions competition, cf. <https://marie-sklodowska-curie-actions.ec.europa.eu/>.

<sup>3</sup> More information about the “European Approach” is available here: <https://enqa.eu/index.php/work-policy-area/enqa-the-bologna-process/european-approach-to-joint-programmes/> and also here:

[https://www.eqar.eu/assets/uploads/2018/04/02\\_European\\_Approach\\_QA\\_of\\_Joint\\_Programmes\\_v1\\_0.pdf](https://www.eqar.eu/assets/uploads/2018/04/02_European_Approach_QA_of_Joint_Programmes_v1_0.pdf).

<sup>4</sup> According to the Lisbon Recognition Convention we do not translate the names of the degrees and qualification into English, and we propose to use the terms: first cycle programme (of studies); second cycle programme (of studies); long cycle programme (of studies). The same applies for the degrees: first cycle diploma/degree; second cycle diploma/degree; long cycle diploma/degree. We refrain from the usage of BA, MA etc., as we do not award those qualifications – we award titles in national languages (on diploma and diploma supplement), and we do not translate them. For more information on the Lisbon Recognition Convention see: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/higher-education-and-research/lisbon-recognition-convention>.

<sup>5</sup> “A review of the literature, university web pages, survey reports and research articles shows a plethora of terms used to describe international collaborative programs, such as double and joint degrees. These terms include: double, multiple, tri-national, joint, integrated, collaborative, international, consecutive, concurrent, co-tutelle, overlapping, conjoint, parallel, simultaneous, and common degrees. They mean different things to different people within and across countries, thereby, causing mass confusion about the real meaning and use of these terms.” KNIGHT, J.: *Doubts and Dilemmas with Double Degree Programs*. In: “Globalisation and Internationalisation of Higher Education” [online monograph]. Revista de Universidad y Sociedad

in individual **practices**. Transnational joint programmes, on the one hand, offer a way to establish **excellent professional and organisational cooperation** coupled with high demands on individual universities and students. On the other hand, transnational joint programmes can also present a means of obtaining funds that the students of these programmes will usually have to pay. While in the first respect this usually leads the participating universities to making studying in the joint program **as obstacle-free as possible** for the learners (and thus, for example, by waiving all kinds of fees as much as possible); on the other hand, there may be a notable effort **to perceive the joint programmes not** as a pursuit of excellence, but rather as a project for which **lower demands** may be made (as compared to the domestic SPs), and mainly as a source of very easily obtainable funds.<sup>6</sup> This situation leads to a **very diverse practice and taxonomy** of international joint study programmes across Europe and beyond.<sup>7</sup>

The platform of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) has addressed this issue at its ministerial conference in Yerevan, Armenia in 2015. One of the documents validated therein by the Ministers of Education was the *European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes*, which codified the following definitions:

*“Joint programmes' are understood as an integrated curriculum coordinated and offered jointly by different higher education institutions from EHEA countries, and leading to double/multiple degrees or a joint degree.*

*Double/multiple degree - Separate degrees awarded by higher education institutions offering the joint programme attesting the successful completion of this programme. (If two degrees are awarded by two institutions, this is a 'double degree').*

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delConocimiento (RUSC). Vol. 8, No 2, pp. 297-312. UOC. 2011. ISSN 1698-580X.

[http://www.ecahe.eu/w/images/e/e6/Doubts\\_and\\_Dilemmas\\_with\\_Double\\_Degree\\_Programs.pdf](http://www.ecahe.eu/w/images/e/e6/Doubts_and_Dilemmas_with_Double_Degree_Programs.pdf).

<sup>6</sup> Cf. “For many academics and policy makers, double and joint degree programmes are welcomed as a natural extension of exchange and mobility programmes. For others, they are perceived as a troublesome development leading to double counting of academic work and the thin edge of academic fraud. Yes - a broad range of reactions exist because of the diversity of programme models being developed, the involvement of different types of traditional and new providers, the uncertainty related to quality assurance and qualifications recognition [...]” KNIGHT, J.: *Joint and Double Degree Programmes: Vexing Questions and Issues*. The Observatory on Borderless Higher Education. September 2008.

[http://ecahe.eu/w/images/c/cc/Joint\\_and\\_double\\_degree\\_programmes\\_-\\_vexing\\_questions\\_and\\_issues\\_-\\_september\\_2008.pdf](http://ecahe.eu/w/images/c/cc/Joint_and_double_degree_programmes_-_vexing_questions_and_issues_-_september_2008.pdf). [http://ecahe.eu/w/images/c/cc/Joint\\_and\\_double\\_degree\\_programmes\\_-\\_vexing\\_questions\\_and\\_issues\\_-\\_september\\_2008.pdf](http://ecahe.eu/w/images/c/cc/Joint_and_double_degree_programmes_-_vexing_questions_and_issues_-_september_2008.pdf). P. 5.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. KNIGHT, J.: *Are double or multiple degrees leading to 'discount degrees'?* In: INTERNATIONAL HIGHER EDUCATION. Number 81: Summer 2015. ISSN 1084-0613. KLING, J.: *The case for evolving from dual to joint degrees*. University World News. 25. 5. 2018. <https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20180522110200691>.

*Joint degree - A single document awarded by higher education institutions offering the joint programme and nationally acknowledged as the recognized award of the joint programme.”<sup>8</sup>*

In practice, however, it is still possible to encounter a conflicting use of that terminology and, in particular, of the term “double degree”, which according to the approved framework means only a jointly awarded qualification (obtained by completing a joint programme) which is attested by the award of two diplomas. However, this practice is fundamentally different in nature from what the methodological materials published under the EU heading refer to as a “dual degree”. However, this label is not used to describe a joint programme, but rather a cooperation between two previously established programmes that exchange students on the basis of a contractual agreement. The most fundamental differences can be briefly described as follows:

“A double degree is a type of multiple degree but here only two documents are awarded. Double degrees are often referred to in one breath with dual degrees. Where double degrees are awarded by joint programmes, dual degrees are not. Dual degrees are awarded for two programmes separately. These two programmes have some coordination and coordinated elements but, contrary to joint programmes, the curriculum is not integrated and not jointly offered. In case of a dual degree, each institution is primarily responsible for its own curriculum and its own degree.”<sup>9</sup>

This material, with its first page showing the basic factual and terminological distinctions, was prepared with the goal of clarifying the mentioned terminology and simplifying communication within (not only) Charles University. The material follows on, and is fully compatible with, a similar overview, developed within the framework of the 4EU+ Alliance and adopted in mid-2022.

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[http://www.ehea.info/media.ehea.info/file/2015\\_Yerevan/73/1/European\\_Approach\\_QA\\_of\\_Joint\\_Programmes\\_613731.pdf](http://www.ehea.info/media.ehea.info/file/2015_Yerevan/73/1/European_Approach_QA_of_Joint_Programmes_613731.pdf), P. 1.

<sup>9</sup> EUROPEAN COMMISSION (Directorate-General for Education and Culture): *Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees. The story so far*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2016. ISBN 978-92-79-58160-1. P. 37. <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/6f52e9bb-31f2-11e6-b497-01aa75ed71a1>.)