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Joint international master's programmes at Aalto University

1. Background and objectives

A strategic aim of Aalto University is to advance Finnish as well as European strategies for research, education and innovation through international networking and partnerships. A key developmental target and objective written in the strategy is the internationality of teaching and study. The development of *double-degree programmes* with top foreign universities is mentioned in this context, whether arranged bilaterally or in a consortium comprising several universities.

As of the 2014–15 academic year, Aalto had 23 master's degree programmes underway as well as one joint doctoral programme, all of which were implemented in international cooperation.¹

A goal of this policy is to clarify the status of joint master's programmes and the procedures for their establishment at Aalto University as well as to give recommendations on their implementation. The working group that prepared this policy was commissioned by the development and steering group for education and teaching (OKKO) in spring 2014. The Learning Services Steering Group (LeSG) backed the policy at its meetings of 16 December 2014 and 12 February 2015.

2. Definitions

In these guidelines, **joint programme** is used as a general term to refer to all of the programmes leading to a master's degree that have been organised by Aalto University together with one or more foreign universities. In the joint programmes, an agreed amount of study and/or research periods abroad are included in the student's study plan. Students who have completed the programme are awarded a degree from two or more universities and one or more degree certificates.

The joint programme may be a joint degree programme, which confers one or more degree certificates, or as a double degree (or dual degree) programme, which on completion confers two or more degree certificates. It should be noted that in European and international discussions, 'joint degree' is often used to cover either type of programme. The recommendation of the Ministry of Education (12 May 2004)² also uses 'joint degree' to cover both programme types, i.e. double degrees are not differentiated from joint degrees.

The working group proposes that '**joint programme**' be used as a general term to cover both concepts, joint degree and double degree. **Joint degree** refers to a programme that is jointly developed and provided by more than one higher education institution, to which outside applicants may seek admission and from which graduating students in principle may receive a degree certificate awarded jointly by the institutions. In joint programmes, the participating universities' course offerings and study administration processes are truly integrated. **Double degree** refers to student-exchange -type cooperation in which students are selected from those already enrolled at the partner university and in which the programme includes a study package arranged by the partner institutions and drawn mainly from existing educational material.

¹ See table on p. 7.

² The Ministry of Education's recommendation (12 May 2004):

http://www.minedu.fi/export/sites/default/OPM/Koulutus/koulutusjaerjestelmae/tutkintojen_tunnustaminen/opetu_sministerioen_suositus_kansainvaelisten_yhteistutkintojen_ja_kaksoistutkintojen_kehittaemisestae/liitteet/JointDegrees_recommendations.pdf

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3. Joint-programme principles at Aalto University

The joint programmes will follow the applicable sections of the Academic Affairs Committee decision (AAK, December 2013) on the principles for establishing new degree programmes.³The planning and organisation of joint programmes will also take note of the recommendations in the Finnish National Board of Education's memorandum, which was produced with the Ministry of Education and Culture and Finnish higher education institutions as well as the Centre for International Mobility (CIMO).⁴

a. Guiding principle

Aalto University urges its schools to include implementation of joint programmes as part of their internationalisation of teaching and study. An aim of the joint programmes is to bring about enduring cooperative relationships. Programme implementation is based on the strategic objectives of the schools and the decision to begin planning will be made at the school management level. Another aim is for the programmes to yield educational, research or other otherwise unavailable added-value for the school, as well as to consolidate the special knowledge and skills present at the universities.

b. Partner universities

Aalto seeks educational cooperation with reputable universities that are officially recognised or accredited in their own countries and especially those that offer postgraduate degrees. The selection of partner universities will take into account the partner university's academic level and the added value the partnership will bring. In line with the school's strategy, geographic considerations may also influence the selection. Previous cooperation with a partner university can facilitate programme planning and organising. A long-term background of collaboration in e.g. research or student exchanges is therefore advisable.

c. Quality

Joint programmes are those in which the planning and implementation is done together with partner universities. Sufficient time should be reserved for planning the programme (e.g. curriculum, study administration, resources and collaboration with the partners) as well as negotiating agreements and establishing the programme. A realistic time estimate from beginning planning to the programme's actual start date is one to two years, depending on the programme type. Programme quality is the responsibility of the school that confers the degree as well as the partner universities. Programmes will be regularly assessed, and the assessments will be planned and carried out with the partner universities.

d. The status of joint programmes at Aalto University

Joint programmes at Aalto University are either master's programmes (degree programmes) or programme modules (areas of specialisation / majors) that can be implemented within existing master's programmes.

³AAK decision on the establishment of new degree programmes (in Finnish; December 2013):

https://inside.aalto.fi/download/attachments/27046333/Liite1_esitys_5.3_AKK_101213_ko_perustaminen+%282%29.pdf?version=1&modificationDate=1386077998000

⁴Memorandum on designing joint degrees (January 2015):

http://www.oph.fi/download/155507_joint_and_double_degrees_january_2014.pdf

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- The joint degrees will be formed as new master's programmes or as areas of specialisation within an existing master's programme. The decision on which form of programme to establish will be made on a case-by-case basis according to the school's criteria and procedures. The following criteria may be used in the decision-making:
 - The programme may be set up as a master's programme if: the programme aims and degree requirements are agreed with the partner universities; the academic and administrative processes for the programme are integrated with the partner universities; implementation of the programme requires significant resources from the school (e.g. teaching staff, student services, programme coordination); and the programme will produce substantial added-value for the school's general curriculum and/or enlarge its selection of master's programmes.
 - The programme may be established as a master's programme due to an external need (such as a funding requirement).
 - The joint programme may be established as a master's programme with more than one Aalto school participating in its implementation.
 - The joint programme may be established as a master's programme when the organising universities intend jointly to award a single degree certificate to students who complete the programme (see section 6 on degree certificates).
- Double degrees are established on areas of specialisation from within an existing master's programme.
 - These programmes are typically bilateral cooperative programmes where students are selected from among students in an agreed degree programme. The number of students is restricted in such agreements, usually to only two to four students per year. This is the quickest and simplest way to complete a double degree. The cooperation differs from student exchanges in that here the students take specific study modules that have been mutually agreed upon and provided by both universities. The students must also meet the admissions criteria for master's studies as well as the final project or thesis requirements of both universities.

e. Fee-based/tuition-based programmes

In Finland a trial with tuition-based education concluded at the end of 2014. Higher degree education is currently cost-free for all students. If a joint programme is planned with a partner university that charges tuition, then the legislation concerning Finland's tuition and how it applies to joint programmes must be clarified before making a final decision to establish the programme. The Universities Act amendment (addition to subsection 1, section 8, 558/2009) that entered into force 1 April 2015 in its current form enables collaboration with partner universities that charge tuition or programme fees. Under the current legislation, the tuition fees charged to these students may not be taken up as income for Aalto.

4. Establishing a joint programme

The establishment of joint programmes will follow where applicable the decision of the AKK on the principles for establishing new degree programmes (2013). The president may decide, however, to fast track a joint programme if required by an application deadline for outside funding or if the school already has adequate resources to carry out the programme. The extent of a joint programme shall be 120 credits.

If outside funding is sought for planning or organising the programme, participation in the project will be decided by the dean at a proposal from the department.

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The proposal to establish a joint programme is made by the dean and submitted to the president or vice president, depending on the type of programme. The proposal for establishment will be based on the programme's intended status (master's programme or area of specialisation). If the programme is established as a master's programme, the decision on establishment will be made by the president. The establishment of a master's programme must always include a decision on the name of the programme, which degrees may be earned through the programme and the language of the degree. If the programme is established as a major or area of specialisation within a master's programme, the decision is made by the vice president at the dean's proposal. Whether established as a major or as an area of specialisation, a joint programme may not deviate from its corresponding master's programme in terms of the language of the degree or the degrees to which it may be applied.

If separate funding is sought to launch a programme, the establishment proposal must include a determination of how the programme will continue once the separate funding has ended.

5. Agreements

A written agreement on the programme will be drawn up between the partner universities. The agreement must not conflict with the rules and regulations of Aalto University or of the partner university, nor with the national legislations of the respective countries. At a minimum, the agreement should include arrangements for the following:

- the extent of studies
- student admissions
- the status and the rights of students
- the names of the degrees conferred
- the awarding of the degree certificate
- obligations of the parties
- the programme management's or steering group's composition and decision-making procedures
- programme funding
- quality assurance procedures and programme assessment
- procedure for withdrawing from the agreement
- resolution of disputes
- the term of the agreement

The agreement is signed by the vice president, in accordance with Aalto's policy instructions on signatures. Any assessment on continuing the programme should be conducted well in advance of the end of the term. As a programme concludes, attention should be paid to the contractual obligations. The decisions to terminate a master's programme is made by the president.

6. The governance model of the joint programmes

The school is responsible for the allocating of academic and administrative resources. The administration of the programme follows the school bylaws. If programme implementation is shared between two or more schools of Aalto, the governance model chosen will be that which is the most functional with respect to the continuity of studies and to the content and character of the programme. If the programme is established as a master's programme, the president's decision to establish will take a stand on the programme's operational units. It is possible to authorise a separate governance model for the programme.

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The procedure for organising a joint programme is generally the same as for Aalto's own master's programmes. The following matters should be noted with regard to international cooperation and the nature of the given programme:

Student admissions

The principles and procedures for student admissions to the programme will be agreed with the partner universities while ensuring they are not in conflict with Aalto's regulations, provisions and bylaws. The partner universities and Aalto will agree on a target quota. It is important to ensure that the number of student places are decided according to Aalto's normal procedures. The times for applying to the programme may differ from those of Aalto's other master's programmes. The program's areas of specialisation will be defined according to the status of the programme (see section 3d above).

Degree certificate

From a degree recognition standpoint it is important for a joint programme to lead to a degree recognised in the system of higher education degrees of at least one of the participating countries. If a graduate of a joint programme is awarded several degrees, the status of the degrees within the higher education system of the respective awarding country shall be determined.

The awarding of an Aalto University degree certificate is conditional on the student entitled to complete a degree having passed the requisite amount of studies at Aalto, including the thesis or final project. The bylaws on credit transfer at the respective school will be observed when deciding the amount of studies to be completed at Aalto. The thesis or final work is to be done and approved in conformity with the rules of Aalto University. Students who complete a degree in an international joint programme at Aalto University will be awarded a degree certificate in English as well as in either Finnish or Swedish. The degree certificate or the appendix to the degree certificate must clearly indicate that the student has participated in a joint programme. The degree certificate must also mention whether the student is receiving two (or more) degree certificates for the same study attainment.

In Finland the awarding of degree certificates must comply with national legislation and with the university's own guidelines. The national legislation does not prevent a Finnish degree certificate from being awarded together with a foreign higher education institution or institutions. Along with the joint degree certificate, the Finnish university must also award a degree certificate with identical content in either Finnish or Swedish. Currently the awarding of joint degree certificates at Aalto University is not possible. The awarding of a joint degree certificate presupposes that Aalto has made a decision-in-principle on criteria and procedures and has made arrangements for joint degree certificate templates. The matter will be brought before the Degree Certificate Committee for consideration.

It must be determined beforehand and clearly communicated to all parties whether the programme will give students eligibility for postgraduate studies and possible professional qualifications.

Curriculum and student guidance

Responsibility for the programme curriculum and the development and revision of teaching lies with the respective degree programme, the department and the school in cooperation with the partner universities. All measures taken should be done in accordance with the normal operating procedures of the school and in cooperation with the partner universities. Sufficient resources are to be set aside for providing study guidance to students. Effective guidance will ensure that students adhere to the study schedule required by the programme.

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Responsible actors and decision-making

A professor in charge (programme director) will be appointed to the programme as well as a study administration coordinator. They will be tasked with, in addition to their normal responsibilities, maintaining contact with the partner universities and taking part in the programme's consortium committee or the equivalent work of the management team. The professor in charge may not be a fixed-term employee.

Decision-making for the joint programme will take place in compliance with the school's bylaws. For example, the joint degree programme committee will work with the respective degree programme committee for the school (or with the master's programme in which the joint programme was established). For schools with no degree programme committee, joint programme matters will be handled by the bodies responsible for matters relating to the school's master's programmes.

Programme management team

Aalto University together with the partner universities will set up a joint management team in which each participating university has a representative. When more than two universities are participating, a coordinating university (and consortium) programme director will be appointed. At least one professor in charge and one study administration coordinator from each participating university will participate in the work of the management team.

Agreement on the composition, duties, work and decision-making procedures of the management team will appear in the programme agreement. The work of the management team must not conflict with Aalto rules and regulations.

Programme support services

The Aalto school concerned will be responsible for the programme's support services. Barring special reason to arrange other procedures, the support services will be implemented by the unit in charge and will follow the university's normal operating procedures. Additional resources from the school's joint services may be needed in an international joint programme to implement e.g. a separate student admissions process, student marketing, the administration of student and teacher mobility, student guidance and monitoring, and collaboration with partner universities. Sufficient resources will be reserved for the support services with respect to these needs. If the programme is implemented by Aalto in cooperation with several Aalto schools, the school deans will arrange the implementation of support services.

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AALTO DOUBLE/JOINT DEGREE PROGRAMMES					
Programme (start year)	Type (funding)	Aalto status	Programme period	Coordinator and partners	School
Space Master - Master's Degree Programme in Space Science and Technology	Erasmus Mundus/EU	Separate master's programme (degree programme)	2005–	<u>Luleå Technical Univ.</u> , Aalto, JMUW (DE), Cranfield, CTU, Paul Sabatier Toulouse III, Univ. Tokyo, Utah State.	ELEC
NordSecMob - Master's Degree Programme in Security and Mobile Computing	Erasmus Mundus/EU	Separate master's programme	2006–	<u>Aalto</u> , KTH, NTNU, DTU, UT (Tartu)	SCI
euSYSBIO - Master's Degree Programme in Computational and Systems Biology	Erasmus Mundus/EU	Separate master's programme	2010–	<u>KTH</u> , Aalto, IST (Lisbon)	SCI
Environomical Pathways for Sustainable Energy Systems (SELECT)	Erasmus Mundus/EU	Separate master's programme	2010–2014/15 (Mundus), InnoEnergy ?	<u>KTH</u> , Aalto, TU Eindhoven, PoliTo, UPC, AGH University of Science and Technology Poland, IST (Lisbon).	CHEM, ENG, SCI:
SELECT+ - Environomical Pathways for Sustainable Energy Services	Erasmus Mundus/EU	Separate doctoral programme	2012–2016	<u>KTH</u> , Aalto, TU Eindhoven, PoliTo, UPC, AGH University of Science and Technology Poland, IST (Lisbon).	CHEM
EMMEP - European Mining, Minerals and Environmental Program	Erasmus Mundus/EU 2009–2014 Bilateral (5 years) from 2014–.	Separate master's programme.	2009/10 – 2013/14 Erasmus Mundus Master's Programme in Minerals and Environmental Engineering. 2014/15 – 2018/19	<u>TU Delft</u> , RWTH Aachen, Aalto, Wroclaw University of Technology, University of Miskolc	ENG, CHEM
Master's Programme in Innovative Sustainable Energy Engineering	Nordic Master Programme/Nordic Council of Ministers	Area specialisation. of	2013/14 – 2017/18	Nordic 5 Tech (Aalto, <u>KTH</u> , Chalmers, <u>DTU</u> , <u>NTNU</u> , University of Iceland)	ENG
Master's Programme in Maritime Engineering	Nordic Master Programme/Nordic Council of Ministers	Area specialisation. of	2011/12 – 2015/16	Nordic 5 Tech (Aalto, <u>KTH</u> , Chalmers, <u>DTU</u> , NTNU)	ENG
Master's Programme in Environmental Engineering	Nordic Master Programme/Nordic Council of Ministers	Master's programme.	2012/13 – 2016/17	Nordic 5 Tech (Aalto, <u>KTH</u> , Chalmers, <u>DTU</u> , NTNU)	ENG
Master's Programme in Sustainable Urban Transitions	Nordic Master Programme/Nordic Council of Ministers	Area specialisation. of		Nordic 5 Tech (Aalto, <u>KTH</u> , <u>Chalmers</u> , DTU, NTNU)	ARTS (arch.)

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Programme (start year)	Type (funding)	Aalto status	Programme period	Coordinator partners	and	School
Master's Programme in Applied and Engineering Mathematics	Nordic Master Programme/Nordic Council of Ministers	Area of specialisation. Also continuing in 2015– as a specialisation area and major in the degree programme "Mathematics and Operations Research"		Nordic 5 Tech (Aalto, KTH, Chalmers, DTU, NTNU)		SCI
Master's Programme in Polymer Technology	Nordic Master Programme/Nordic Council of Ministers	Area of specialisation.	2014– (for first intake 2015)	Nordic 5 Tech (Aalto, KTH, Chalmers, DTU, NTNU)		CHEM
Master's Programme in ICT Innovation (EIT ICT Labs Master School)	EIT ICT Lab	Area of specialisation. Also continuing (2015–) as a separate specialisation area, under the five-major ICT Innovation programme, which is under the Computer, Communication and Information Sciences (CCIS) programme.	2012–	EIT ICT Labs Master School Office (KTH university administration). Aalto's partners: TU Berlin, Karlsruhe Institute of Technology, TU/Eindhoven, TU Delft, Univ of Twente, University Paris-Sud XI, University of Rennes 1, KTH, University of Trento, Eötvös Lorand University, Budapest University of Technology and Economics, Imperial College London, University College London.		SCI
Nordic Visual Studies and Art Education (NoVA)	Multilateral (Nordplus/EDDA network)	Area of specialisation.	2014–	Aalto, Konstfack, Aalborg University, Oslo and Akershus University College of Applied Sciences (HOA).		ARTS
Universite Catholique de Louvain		Bilateral (intake only for Aalto students).	2008 (5 year periods)			BIZ
Queensland University		Bilateral (intake only for Aalto students).	2013 (five year periods)			BIZ
ESADE Business School (ES)		Bilateral (intake only for Aalto students).	2014 (five year periods)			BIZ (IDBM)
University of Cologne		Bilateral (intake only for Aalto students).	2008 (five year periods)			BIZ
TELECOM SudParis		Bilateral (intake only for Aalto students).				ELEC
Tongji University		Bilateral (intake only for Aalto students).				ARTS, BIZ, SCI (IDBM)
IST Lisbon (2 programmes)	CLUSTER Dual Master	Bilateral (intake only for Aalto students).				SCI

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UPC Barcelona Tech (3 programmes)	CLUSTER Master	Dual	Bilateral (intake only for Aalto students).			SCI
Programme (start year)	Type (funding)		Aalto status	Programme period	Coordinator and partners	School
ITMO University/Saint-Petersburg National Research University of Information Technologies, Mechanics and Optics			Bilateral (intake only for Aalto students).	26 June 2014 – 26 June 2020	Aalto University, ELEC and ITMO University (Saint-Petersburg National Research University of Information Technologies, Mechanics and Optics)	ELEC
TU Darmstadt	CLUSTER Master	Dual	Bilateral (intake only for Aalto students).	2012/13 – 2016/17		ENG
Programmes in development						
European Master in Arts of Sound EMAS	EU LLP funding, multilateral				School of Arts Ghent (B) , Aalto, Nederlandse Film en Televisie Academie, Netherlands; ENSATT, France; Festival International du Film d'Aubagne, France; Flanders International Film Festival, Belgium; ifs internationale filmschule köln, Germany; and The School of Sound (UK).	ARTS
Nordic Master in Glass Design	Nordic Programme/Nordic Council of Ministers	Master		2016 at the earliest	Linnaeus University (Sweden) , The Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts school of architecture, design and conservation (DK), Aalto	ARTS
Nordic Master in Cold Climate Engineering	Nordic Programme/Nordic Council of Ministers	Master		Programme start 2016.	Technical University of Denmark DTU , The Norwegian University of Technology and Science (NTNU) (NO), Aalto. Nordic 5 Tech collaboration.	ENG